

Analysis Of Gender Studies On Early Marriage Culture In Wetland Areas

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Abstract. UNICEF in 2023 showed that Indonesia is one of the 10 countries with the highest number of child marriages, with 25.53 million married under the age of 19. The proportion of marriages under 19 years old in South Kalimantan is 0.54%, and in Banjar Regency is 0.63%. This can have both physical and psychological impacts. This study aims to analyze the relationship between knowledge, attitudes, gender roles, and culture towards the decision to marry early, as well as to describe the community's perception of early marriage from various perspectives. This research is a mixed-method study, consisting of quantitative research (cross-sectional design) and qualitative research (phenomenological approach). The study population includes young girls in the working area of the Martapura Timur Health Center. The quantitative sample consists of all young girls in one designated school. The research instrument is a questionnaire that has been tested for validity and reliability. Data were analyzed using the Chi-Square test. The qualitative informants in this study include the village head, community health volunteers, parents, young girls, and a midwife—each represented by one individual. The variables explored include perceptions and factors triggering early marriage through in-depth interviews. The study results show that the p-value for the relationship between knowledge and the decision to marry early is 0.104, p=0.048 for attitudes, p=0.838 for gender perceptions, p=0.600 for culture, and p=0.838 for community perceptions. In-depth interview results indicate that the main trigger for early marriage is unwanted pregnancy. The study concludes that there is a relationship between attitudes and the decision to marry early among young girls in the wetlands area, and the identified trigger for early marriage is unwanted pregnancy.

Keywords: Gender, culture, early marriage, knowledge, attitude

1 Introduction

Early marriage is a marriage that takes place below the age specified by law. Law No. 16 of 2019 is an amendment to Law No. 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage. Under Law No. 16 of 2019, marriage is only permitted if both men and women have reached the age of 19. This represents a significant change, as previously, Article 7, paragraph (1) of Law No. 1 of 1974 stated that marriage is only allowed if the man has reached the age of 19 and the woman has reached the age of 16 (1).

According to UNICEF data from 2023, approximately 640 million girls have married before the age of 18, with 95 million of them living in East Asia and the Pacific. The same UNICEF data indicates that Indonesia ranks among the top 10 countries with the highest cases of child marriage, amounting to 25.53 million children married (2). Data from the Central Statistics Agency shows that the proportion of marriages among individuals under 19 years of age in South Kalimantan Province is 0.54 percent, meaning that for every 1,000 women in South Kalimantan, there are 5 women who are married and under 19 years old. Additionally, data indicates that the percentage of child marriages in Banjar Regency is 0.63 percent, which is higher than the provincial average. According to data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Religious Court in South Kalimantan, child marriages in Banjar Regency rank third, following the cities of Banjarmasin and Tabalong. This situation certainly requires attention as it can lead to both physical and psychological impacts (3, 4, 5).

The issue of child marriage is one of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030. In target 5.3 of the SDGs, the aim is to "eliminate all harmful practices, such as child marriage, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation." Specifically, the SDGs include indicator 5.3 in the form of the proportion of women aged 20-24 who are married or living together before the age of 15 and before the age of 18. This indicator represents a form of protection for children against the practice of marriage and aims to curb population growth (6).

Child marriage among adolescents tends to have negative impacts in terms of socioeconomic factors, reproductive health, mental/psychological issues, and physical health. The occurrence of child marriage can lead to various problems, not only for the individuals involved but also within their families and communities, potentially causing issues at the national and even global levels (7).

Research by Irawati and Azinar (2022) states that there is a relationship between gender roles, knowledge, and attitudes towards the decision to marry early, with knowledge being the most significant factor (8). Yudianingsih et al. (2022) state that the factors triggering early marriage include economic factors, education, mass media, traditions/customs, "married by accident," place of residence, natural disasters, and government regulations (6). Hidayatulloh et al. (2018) concluded that several perceptions related to early marriage play a significant role in the emergence of these issues, including perceptions related to religion, culture, economy, and law (9).

This study aims to analyze the relationship between knowledge, attitudes, gender roles, and culture towards the decision to marry early, as well as to describe the community's perceptions regarding early marriage.

2 Methods

This research is a mixed-method study consisting of quantitative research (analytical observational) using a cross-sectional design and qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. The research population is young girls in the working area of the Martapura Timur Health Center. The sample taken consists of young girls from one designated Madrasah Aliyah (Islamic high school).

2.1 Quantitative Research

The sample for the quantitative research is all young girls enrolled in one Madrasah Aliyah designated by the Health Center as the research location. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, with inclusion criteria including willingness to be research subjects, permission from parents, and being unmarried. The research instrument consists of a questionnaire to identify independent variables (knowledge, attitudes, gender studies, and culture), as well as the decision to marry early to identify the dependent variable. The questionnaire will be tested for validity and reliability beforehand. Data will be analyzed univariately using frequency distribution tables and bivariately using the Chi-Square test.

2.2 Qualitative Research

The informants used in this study include the village head, community health volunteers, parents, young girls, and health workers, with one representative from each group. The variables explored are perceptions of early marriage from cultural, religious, economic, and legal aspects. Data exploration will be conducted using in-depth interview methods.

2.3 Research Procedures

- a. Questionnaire Completion Procedure: Valid and reliable questionnaires will be distributed to the research subjects, with each individual answering the questionnaire according to instructions while being assisted by field assistants. The duration for completion is approximately 30 minutes. Field assistants will ensure that the questionnaires are filled out individually and completely.
- b. Qualitative Data Collection Procedure: This will be conducted using interview guidelines, starting with introductions and interview instructions, followed by a question-and-answer session until the informants' responses reach saturation.

3 Results And Discussion

This study is a mixed-method research that uses both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Quantitative data collection has been conducted with 49 female students from MA Izharil Ulum, consisting of grades X, XI, and XII. Meanwhile, qualitative data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with the village head, midwives, community health volunteers, adolescents who have engaged in early marriage, and their parents.

3.1 Quantutative Data

The research has been conducted on 49 female students of MA Izharil Ulum as quantitative results. Overall, there are 36 individuals (73.5%) out of 49 respondents who have a negative attitude towards early marriage, while 13 individuals (26.5%) out of 49 respondents have a positive attitude towards early marriage. The quantitative data analysis is as follows:

A. The relationship between knowledge and the decision to marry early.

Data showing the analysis of the relationship between knowledge and the decision to marry early among adolescent girls is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Analysis of Knowledge Data with the Decision to Marry Early

			Decision to marry early		Total	p value
			Negative	Positive		
Knowledge	Low	Total	1	2	3	0,104
		Percentage	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%	
	Good	Total	35	11	46	
		Percentage	76.1%	23.9%	100.0%	
Total	Total		36	13	49	
	% of Total		73.5%	26.5%	100.0%	

Based on the table above, of the 3 individuals with low knowledge, 1 person has a negative attitude towards early marriage (33.3%), while 2 individuals have a positive attitude towards early marriage (66.7%). Among the 46 individuals with good knowledge, 35 have a negative attitude towards early marriage (76.1%), while 11 have a positive attitude (23.9%).

The value is 0.104, indicating that there is no significant relationship between the level of knowledge and the decision to marry early. This can be seen from the data that the majority of

respondents with good knowledge tend to have a negative attitude towards early marriage (76.1%), while a small minority with good knowledge still have a positive attitude (23.9%).

The discussion regarding the absence of a relationship between knowledge and the decision to marry early among adolescent girls can be explained by several factors that influence individual behavior, which are more complex than knowledge alone. These factors may include:

a. Strong Social and Cultural Influences

Although adolescent girls may be aware of the negative impacts of early marriage, they may feel bound by social and cultural norms that support the practice of early marriage. In certain communities, early marriage is viewed as an obligation or part of a tradition that is followed across generations. As a result, even though they understand the negative consequences, social pressure compels them to decide to marry early.

b. Influence of Parents and Environment

Parents, family, or the surrounding environment can significantly influence this decision. In some cases, parents may encourage or even force their children to marry early due to economic factors, social status, or cultural views. Thus, the knowledge possessed by adolescent girls does not always become the primary factor in decision-making, as these decisions are often influenced by others.

c. Economic Factors

Economic limitations often serve as the primary reason why early marriage occurs. In families facing financial difficulties, marrying off daughters early is often seen as a way to alleviate the family's financial burden. Although a young girl may know that early marriage is not an ideal decision, her family's economic situation may force her to agree. Thus, knowledge is not strong enough to resist the pressing economic pressures.

d. Lack of Autonomy in Decision-Making

Many adolescent girls, especially in conservative or patriarchal communities, lack autonomy in making important decisions in their lives, including marriage. Such decisions may be largely determined by parents or other authorities considered more competent. As a result, even though they have sufficient knowledge about the risks of early marriage, they are not given the opportunity to apply that knowledge in the decision-making process.

e. Lack of Access to Alternatives

Even if a young girl knows that early marriage has negative impacts, she may not see any realistic alternatives, especially if access to education or employment is limited. Without better options, marriage may be viewed as the only escape from a difficult situation, even if they are aware of the associated risks.

f. Emotional and Psychological Maturity

Adolescent girls may not yet be fully emotionally and psychologically mature enough to understand the long-term implications of early marriage, even if they possess knowledge

about it. Knowledge alone is not always accompanied by a deep understanding of its impact on the future, especially if they are still in a tumultuous stage of emotional development.

Thus, the absence of a relationship between knowledge and the decision to marry early among adolescent girls can be explained by the complex interaction between knowledge, social norms, economic pressures, and the lack of autonomy and access to other choices. Knowledge, while important, is often not sufficient to overcome the various strong external factors influencing these decisions.

B. The relationship between attitude and the decision to marry early

Data analysis between attitude and the decision to marry early among adolescent girls is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Analysis of Attitude with the Decision to Marry Early

			<u>Decision to marry early</u>		Total	p value
			Negative	Negative		
Attitude	Negative	Total	3	4	7	0,048
		Percent	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%	
	Positive	Total	33	9	42	
		Percent	78.6%	21.4%	100.0%	
Total		Total	36	13	49	
		% of	73.5%	26.5%	100.0%	
		Total				

Based on the table above, out of 7 individuals with negative attitudes, 3 (42.9%) have a negative attitude towards early marriage, while 4 (57.1%) have a positive attitude towards early marriage. Among the 42 individuals with a positive attitude, 33 (78.6%) have a negative attitude towards early marriage, and 9 (21.4%) have a positive attitude towards early marriage.

The p-value = 0.048 indicates that there is a significant relationship between attitude and the decision to marry early. The majority of respondents with a positive attitude towards various matters generally tend to reject early marriage (78.6%), while those with a negative attitude are more likely to support early marriage (57.1%).

An individual's attitude is one of the important factors that influence behavior and the decisions made, including the decision to marry early among adolescent girls. This attitude can be shaped by experiences, beliefs, values, and social norms. The following is a discussion of why attitude is closely related to the decision to marry early among adolescent girls:

a. Attitude towards Early Marriage as a Reflection of Values and Beliefs

An individual's attitude towards early marriage is greatly influenced by the values and beliefs they hold. Adolescent girls who have a positive attitude towards early marriage, for example, may view it as normal and expected in their culture or community, leading them to be more accepting of the decision to marry at a young age. Conversely, those who have a negative or skeptical attitude towards early marriage—perhaps because they see it as an obstacle to education or freedom—tend to reject or avoid early marriage.

b. Influence of Attitude on Perception of Benefits and Risks

An adolescent's attitude towards early marriage also affects how they perceive its benefits and risks. Adolescent girls with a positive attitude towards early marriage are more likely to view marriage as beneficial, for instance, in terms of economic stability or social status, and may overlook or underestimate its risks, such as health impacts or the potential for dropping out of school. In contrast, those with a negative attitude are more likely to focus on those risks and see early marriage as disadvantageous.

c. Attitude Shaped by Experience and Social Environment

Adolescents' attitudes towards early marriage are often shaped by their social environment, including family, friends, and the community. Adolescents raised in environments where early marriage is considered the norm are likely to develop a more positive attitude towards this practice. They see it as something expected or even supported by society. Conversely, adolescents raised in environments where early marriage is rare or viewed negatively will develop different, more critical attitudes.

d. Attitude as a Driving Factor in Decision Making

Attitude is a crucial component in the decision-making process. Adolescent girls with a positive attitude towards early marriage are more likely to decide to marry early because their attitude encourages them to see this decision as natural, right, or desirable. This attitude also influences how they evaluate information they receive regarding early marriage—from parents, peers, or media—and makes them more selective in considering information that supports the decision to marry early.

e. Alignment of Attitude with Social Norms and Environmental Expectations

In many cases, adolescent girls' attitudes towards early marriage are closely aligned with the existing social norms in their communities. If their community supports early marriage, they may develop a positive attitude towards it in an effort to conform to social expectations. This attitude reflects an attempt to maintain social status, family honor, or align with parental and community expectations.

f. Attitude Towards Personal Autonomy

Adolescents' attitudes towards personal freedom and autonomy in making decisions are also related to early marriage. Adolescents who value autonomy and believe they should be able to make major life decisions themselves are likely to reject early marriage, especially if they feel this decision is made without their full consent. Conversely, those who believe family or community has more authority over their lives may find it easier to accept early marriage.

g. Influence of Attitude on Assessment of Life Success

For some adolescent girls, attitudes towards life success may focus on traditional aspects such as marriage and having a family. If they view marriage as a sign of success or maturity, they are more likely to agree to and decide to marry early. This is particularly likely in cultures or communities where a woman's value is often measured by her marital status.

h. Attitude and Future Aspirations

Attitudes are also related to an adolescent's future aspirations. If an adolescent girl has high aspirations to continue her education or pursue a career, she may have a more negative attitude towards early marriage, as she sees it as an obstacle to those future goals. Conversely, if her aspirations are more focused on domestic roles or family life, she is more likely to have a positive attitude towards early marriage.

Adolescent girls' attitudes play a crucial role in the decision to marry early, as these attitudes reflect their perspectives on marriage, values, social expectations, and their perceptions of its benefits and risks. A positive attitude towards early marriage is often influenced by social norms, environmental experiences, and personal beliefs that shape how they evaluate early marriage as a suitable choice or not. Therefore, attitude has a significant role in determining whether an adolescent girl will decide to marry early.

C. The Relationship Between Gender Perception and the Decision to Marry Early

Analysis of the data on perception and the decision to marry early among adolescent girls is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Analysis of Gender Perception and the Decision to Marry Early

			Decision to marry early		Total	p
			Negative	Positive		value
Gender Perception	Negative	Total	26	9	35	0,838
		Percentage	74.3%	25.7%	100.0%	
	Positive	Total	10	4	14	
		Percentage	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%	

	Percentage	71.4%	28.6%	100.
				0%
Total	Total	36	13	49
	% of Total	73.5%	26.5%	100.
				0%

Based on the table above, of the 35 individuals with a negative gender perception, 26 (74.3%) have a negative attitude towards early marriage, while 9 (25.7%) have a positive attitude towards early marriage. Of the 14 individuals with a positive gender perception, 10 (71.4%) have a negative attitude towards early marriage, and 4 (28.6%) have a positive attitude towards early marriage.

The p-value is 0.838, indicating that there is no significant relationship between gender perception and the decision to marry early. The majority of respondents with both negative and positive gender perceptions tend to reject early marriage (74.3% and 71.4%, respectively).

The discussion regarding why there is no relationship between gender perception and the decision to marry early among adolescent girls can be viewed from several perspectives that reveal that other factors have a greater influence on this decision, including:

a. Strong Influence of Social and Cultural Norms

In many societies, social and cultural norms are stronger than individual perceptions of gender. Although an adolescent girl may have a more equal or progressive perception of gender roles, the decision to marry early is often driven by societal expectations and pressures. In environments where early marriage is the norm, individual perceptions of gender may not be the primary determining factor. They may feel compelled to conform to these social norms, regardless of their views on gender roles.

b. Pressure from Family and Parental Authority

The decision to marry early is often influenced more by pressure from family, particularly parents, than by personal perceptions of gender. In many cases, families facing economic or social difficulties may feel that marrying off their daughters at a young age is a way to secure the family's future or improve social status. Even if an adolescent girl perceives that women and men should have equal rights, pressure from parents and family to marry is more likely to affect her decision than that perception.

c. Gender Perception May Not Be Connected to Real-Life Practices

More equal or progressive gender perceptions may not always be applied in real-life practices, especially in environments where early marriage is common. A person may have the view or perception that women should have freedom and autonomy, but in daily life, important decisions such as early marriage are still determined by others, particularly family or community. In this case, gender perception becomes irrelevant because the real situation they face differs from their ideal view.

d. Influence of Economic Factors

The decision to marry early is often more related to economic factors than to gender perception. In families with financial difficulties, marrying off daughters is seen as a solution to alleviate economic burdens. These economic factors often dominate decision-making more than the views or perceptions of adolescent girls regarding gender. Thus, even if they have more progressive gender perceptions, economic constraints can lead to the decision to marry early.

e. Lack of Access to Education and Information

Gender perception is often shaped through adequate education and exposure to information. However, in many communities that still support early marriage, adolescent girls may not have sufficient access to education or information regarding equal gender roles. Therefore, although they have views about gender roles, the lack of access to education and information means that these perceptions are not fully applied in decision-making regarding early marriage.

f. Dominance of Patriarchal Norms

In many societies that adhere to patriarchal systems, the existing gender norms are deeply entrenched, making individual perceptions of gender often not strong enough to change decisions related to early marriage. Even if an adolescent girl holds the view that women should have equal opportunities as men, the patriarchal system emphasizing women's domestic roles and promoting early marriage makes that perception ineffective in her final decision.

g. Limited Autonomy in Decision-Making

In the context of early marriage, adolescent girls often lack full autonomy to determine when they will marry. Parents, family, or community leaders often make the decisions. Even if these girls have a more equal perception of gender, their inability to have full control over their life decisions renders that perception ineffective in the decision regarding early marriage.

h. Power Dynamics within Family Relationships

In many communities, power within the family is centered on the parents, especially the father, who may view early marriage as a way to protect the family's honor or enhance social status. Although adolescent girls may perceive that they should have greater control over their lives as women, the power dynamics within the family make it difficult for them to reject the decision to marry early. Thus, their gender perceptions do not become a primary factor in that decision.

The lack of relationship between gender perception and the decision to marry early among adolescent girls can be explained by the dominance of external factors such as social norms, family pressures, economic conditions, and a lack of personal autonomy. Although adolescent girls may have more progressive or equal perceptions regarding gender, these factors play a greater role in the decision-making related to early marriage. Consequently, gender perception does not become the main determining factor in that decision, as the decision to marry early is more influenced by the social, cultural, and situational conditions faced by these adolescent girls.

D. The Relationship Between Culture and the Decision to Marry Early

The analysis of the relationship between culture and the decision to marry early among adolescent girls can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Analysis of Culture and the Decision to Marry Early

		Decision to marry early		Total	P value
		Negative	Positive		
Culture	Negative	Total	8	2	10
		Percentage	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	Positive	Total	28	11	39
		Percentage	71.8%	28.2%	100.0%
Total		Total	36	13	49
		% of Total	73.5%	26.5%	100.0%

Based on the table above, out of 10 individuals with a negative cultural perception, 8 people (80.0%) have a negative attitude towards early marriage, while 2 people (20.0%) have a positive attitude towards early marriage. Among the 39 individuals with a positive cultural perception, 28 people (71.8%) have a negative attitude towards early marriage, while 11 people (28.2%) have a positive attitude towards early marriage.

The p-value = 0.600 indicates that there is no significant relationship between cultural perception and the decision to marry early. This is supported by data showing that the majority of respondents, both with negative and positive cultural perceptions, tend to reject early marriage. Overall, these results indicate that cultural perception is not statistically significant in influencing the decision to marry early among the respondents. Other factors outside of culture may have a greater impact on views regarding early marriage.

The discussion about the lack of a relationship between culture and the decision to marry early among adolescent girls can be explained by understanding that culture, although often considered a major factor influencing early marriage decisions, may not always be the sole determining factor. Here are several reasons why culture may not be directly related to early marriage decisions:

a. Influence of Stronger External Factors

While culture plays a role in shaping norms and behaviors, the decision to marry early is often influenced by more pressing factors such as economics, education, and family. For example, in families experiencing economic difficulties, the decision to marry early may be driven more by economic pressure than by cultural norms. In other words, although the culture of a community

may support or encourage early marriage, the decision is often influenced more by the practical conditions faced by the adolescent and their family.

b. Individual Influence and Personal Aspirations

The decision to marry early may be more influenced by the personal aspirations of adolescent girls than by cultural norms. Adolescents with personal ambitions, such as pursuing education or achieving financial independence, may focus more on these goals than adhering to cultural norms that promote early marriage. Even if they live in a culture that supports early marriage, these personal aspirations can lead them to postpone marriage.

c. The Role of Education in Shaping Perceptions

Education plays a significant role in shaping an individual's mindset, including how they perceive culture and traditions. Adolescent girls with access to further education often have a more critical understanding of the culture they live in, which may lead them to reevaluate practices such as early marriage. Thus, while culture may support early marriage, education can be a strong counterbalance, making adolescent girls more critical of those cultural norms, potentially leading them to choose not to follow those traditions.

d. Variation in Cultural Interpretation

Culture is not a homogeneous entity; within a culture, individuals and families can have different interpretations of norms and traditions. Some families may strictly adhere to the tradition of early marriage, while others may be more flexible in its application. Thus, even though the overall culture of a society supports early marriage, not all individuals in that society will make the same decision. Families that are more open to social change may grant their daughters greater freedom to choose when they want to marry.

e. Social Change and Globalization Influence

In many communities, rapid social changes due to globalization and modernization have altered perceptions of traditional practices like early marriage. The influence of media, technology, and interaction with other cultures has brought new perspectives to adolescent girls, making them more critical of old traditions. Although their original culture may support early marriage, these social changes lead many adolescents to be more inclined to postpone marriage and choose different life paths.

f. Personal Autonomy in Decision-Making

In some cases, even if culture advocates for early marriage, individuals who have autonomy in decision-making may reject or delay such marriages. This often occurs among adolescent girls who receive more egalitarian support from their families, where important decisions such as marriage are given to the individual, rather than being imposed by cultural norms. Adolescent girls with greater autonomy in managing their lives are likely to make decisions based on their personal needs and desires, regardless of cultural pressure.

g. Religious Factors Taking Precedence

In some instances, the decision to marry early may be more influenced by religious factors than by cultural ones. Some families may emphasize religious teachings that support early marriage as a way to maintain morality or honor, rather than merely following cultural traditions. If the decision to marry early is more influenced by religious factors, culture becomes less relevant in this decision-making process.

h. Gradual Cultural Change

Culture is not static; it evolves over time. In many communities, practices of early marriage that were once part of local culture may have begun to fade or change. Even in societies that previously supported early marriage, there is a tendency for changes in norms that allow adolescent girls to postpone marriage and focus on education or careers first. These changes may occur gradually and are not always uniform across the community, but they indicate that culture is not always the sole determinant in early marriage decisions.

i. Resistance to Cultural Traditions

Not all individuals or families in a society passively accept the culture of early marriage. In some cases, adolescent girls and their families may hold critical views of these cultural traditions and attempt to resist or change them. Resistance to these cultural traditions may arise from a growing awareness of women's rights, support for education, or changing family values. As a result, culture does not always play a dominant role in decisions about early marriage.

The absence of a relationship between culture and the decision to marry early among adolescent girls can be explained by various other factors that exert a stronger influence on these decisions, such as economic conditions, education, personal autonomy, and individual aspirations. Although culture provides a social framework that influences societal views on early marriage, in many cases, these decisions are more influenced by practical needs and more pressing external factors. Therefore, culture is not the only factor determining the decision to marry early, as many adolescent girls and their families can choose paths different from existing cultural norms.

E. The Relationship Between Community Perception and the Decision to Marry Early

The analysis of the relationship between the community's perception of early marriage and the decision to marry early among adolescent girls is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Analysis of Community Perception Data and Decisions on Early Marriage

			Decision to marry early		Total	P value
			Negative	Negative		
Community perception	Negative	Total	26	9	35	0,838
		Percentage	74.3%	25.7%	100.0%	
	Positive	Total	10	4	14	
		Percentage	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%	
Total		Total	36	13	49	
		% of Total	73.5%	26.5%	100.0%	

Based on the table above, out of 35 individuals with a negative community perception, 26 individuals (74.3%) have a negative attitude towards early marriage, while 9 individuals (25.7%) have a positive attitude towards early marriage. Among the 14 individuals with a positive community perception, 10 individuals (71.4%) have a negative attitude towards early marriage, while 4 individuals (28.6%) have a positive attitude towards early marriage. The P value is 0.838, indicating that there is no significant relationship between community perception and the decision to marry early. This aligns with the data analysis showing that the majority of respondents, regardless of whether they had a negative or positive community perception, tended to reject early marriage. Overall, these results indicate that community perception is not statistically significant in influencing the decision to marry early among respondents. Other factors beyond community perception may play a role.

The discussion regarding why community perception does not correlate with the decision to marry early among adolescent girls can be explained by several reasons. Although community perception is often considered a factor influencing individual decisions, other factors dominate in the decision to marry early. Here are some key reasons why community perception does not always directly relate to early marriage decisions among adolescent girls:

a. Influence of Stronger Family Pressure

The decision to marry early is often more influenced by family than by general community perception. In many cases, parents or extended family play a crucial role in deciding when and with whom adolescent girls will marry. Even if the community has perceptions

supporting or opposing early marriage, the final decision is often based on family interests, whether for economic, social, or family tradition reasons. This family pressure is often more direct and influential than the views of the broader community.

b. Economic Factors

The economic conditions of a family are also a more significant factor in the decision to marry early. Families facing economic difficulties may view early marriage as a solution to reduce their financial burden or even as a way to gain financial support. In this context, although the community may have a negative perception of early marriage, the decision is made due to urgent economic needs. Community perception, in this case, may not have a significant influence compared to the economic pressures faced by the family.

c. Limited Autonomy of Adolescent Girls in Decision-Making

Adolescent girls often do not have full autonomy in making important decisions, including the decision to marry. The decision to marry early is often made by family members or parents rather than by the adolescent herself. In many cases, even if community perception may support marriage at an older age, adolescent girls do not have complete control over that decision. This limitation of autonomy makes community perception less relevant in the decision-making process.

d. Variation in Community Perception

Communities do not always have a uniform view of early marriage. Within a community, there can be significant differences in how people view early marriage, depending on factors such as education, economic background, and cultural views. Because community perception is not always homogeneous, the decision to marry early may not always be influenced by the overall community perception. There are segments of the community that support early marriage while others may oppose it, and the decision made often depends on the immediate environment of the adolescent and her family.

e. Influence of Specific Family Traditions and Culture

In many communities, specific family traditions or cultures are more influential than general community perceptions. While the community may be moving towards a more progressive stance and delaying early marriage, some families or sub-communities may still strongly adhere to traditions that encourage early marriage. In such situations, the decision to marry early is influenced more by family traditions or those of the sub-community than by the broader societal views. Families may feel more bound to their traditions than to follow trends or the views of the larger community.

f. Limited Access to Education and Information

Community perceptions of early marriage are often influenced by the level of education and access to available information. In areas with limited educational access, the community may be less aware of the negative impacts of early marriage, such as potential health risks or limited economic opportunities. In this case, even if community perceptions

may support early marriage, it is more due to a lack of understanding or information. However, for adolescent girls with better access to education, the decision to marry early may be more influenced by their personal aspirations, regardless of the surrounding community perception.

g. Slow Social Change

Although community perceptions of early marriage may be changing, the process of social change often occurs slowly. The community as a whole may begin to move away from the practice of early marriage, but these changes do not always directly reflect in individual or family decisions. Adolescent girls may still be bound by the norms established in their families or small communities, even as the broader society begins to reject early marriage. In other words, even though there may be changes in community perception, the decision to marry early remains based on local norms and practices that have not fully changed.

h. Influence of Media and Globalization

In the era of globalization, the influence of media and external cultures also affects how adolescents view marriage. While the local community may have perceptions that support early marriage, adolescent girls exposed to global media and international trends may have differing views. They may prefer to delay marriage for education or career development, regardless of the community's perception around them. This media influence can serve as a counterbalance to traditional norms, making local community perceptions less relevant in personal decision-making.

i. Individual Factors and Future Aspirations

Community perceptions do not always directly relate to the decision to marry early because each individual has different aspirations and life goals. Adolescent girls with strong aspirations to pursue further education or a career may focus more on achieving their personal goals, making community perceptions about early marriage less impactful. Those with a more individualistic view may be more oriented toward their own desires and goals than conforming to societal expectations.

The lack of a relationship between community perception and the decision to marry early among adolescent girls can be explained by various other more dominant factors, such as family pressure, economic conditions, and individual autonomy. Although the community may hold certain views about early marriage, these decisions are often more influenced by family dynamics, local traditions, and the socio-economic conditions faced by the adolescent and her family. Community perception is not always relevant, especially when other stronger factors, such as family pressure and personal aspirations, play a larger role in decision-making.

3.2 Qualitative Data

Qualitative research was conducted with the village head, one midwife, one community health worker, one adolescent who married early, and the relevant parents. The results of interviews with various informants mention several factors that trigger early marriage, such as:

“There are indeed many who marry early. Dominantly, it is women who decide to marry, often due to accidents. The social interactions here are not really free; they mostly stay at home. Perhaps it is due to a lack of parental attention. Factors include social interactions, and economic issues can also play a role.” (Mrs. N).

“In this village, the majority of those getting married are women. The reasons parents marry off their children vary, including the desire to have in-laws or grandchildren and economic reasons.” (Mrs. K).

“The reason for early marriage is that they are already pregnant. It is indeed the desire of both parties and a request from both parents.” (Mrs. I).

The results of the qualitative research indicate that the risk factors leading adolescents to marry early include risky social interactions that result in unwanted pregnancies, prompting parents to marry off their children. This is caused by:

- a. Risky Social Interactions: Interactions that involve sexual behavior outside of marriage, which may occur due to a lack of sexual education, weak supervision, or environmental influences, are significant factors.
- b. Unwanted Pregnancies: Pregnancies that occur unexpectedly, especially in adolescence, create high social and economic pressure. In many cases, families feel that marrying off the adolescent is a way to maintain honor and meet social expectations.
- c. Parents as Decision Makers: Parents often feel pressured to marry off their children to avoid the social stigma that may arise from pregnancies before marriage.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of reproductive health education and better social supervision for adolescents to prevent unwanted pregnancies, as well as the need to raise awareness of the risks associated with early marriage in terms of health, education, and well-being.

4 Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that there is a relationship between attitudes and decisions regarding early marriage among adolescent girls in wetland areas, but there is no relationship between knowledge, gender perception, culture, and community perception with decisions regarding early marriage among adolescent girls in wetland areas. The factor that most commonly triggers early marriage among adolescent girls is unwanted pregnancy.

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