

Parental Influence on Adolescents' Knowledge and Attitudes Toward Early Marriage

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Abstract

East Java records the highest percentage of child marriage in Indonesia, at 10.44%, with Malang Regency ranking first with 1,455 marriage dispensations. Early marriage commonly occurs among adolescents who still need parental support. This study focuses on parental characteristics, including age, education, socioeconomic status, and sociocultural background. This study aimed to examine the relationship between parental characteristics and adolescents' knowledge and attitudes regarding the dangers of early marriage. The study uses an analytical design with a cross-sectional approach, involving 43 students and 43 of their parents. Data are collected through questionnaires and analyzed using the Chi-Square test with a significance level of 0.05. There was no significant relationship between parents' education, socioeconomic status, or sociocultural background and adolescents' knowledge and attitudes. However, parents' age showed a significant relationship with adolescents' knowledge ($p = 0.015$) and attitudes ($p = 0.012$). The age of parents significantly affects adolescents' knowledge and attitudes toward early marriage at SMPN 2 Singosari, Malang Regency.

Keywords: Parental Characteristics, Dangers of Early Marriage, Adolescents

1. Introduction

Early marriage is a global issue with a high prevalence in Indonesia, particularly in East Java. According to recent data, Indonesia ranks second among ASEAN countries in cases of early marriage, with 11.2% of girls marrying before the age of 18.^{1,2} According to KUA (Office of Religious Affairs) Singosari report, there were 100 cases of marriage dispensation issued in Singosari District in 2022. Malang Regency has the highest rate in East Java, with Singosari District recording 100 cases of marriage dispensation in 2022.³

The main factors contributing to early marriage include poverty, low parental education, and a lack of adolescent knowledge about reproductive health risks. The impacts are severe, including increased maternal and infant mortality rates, psychological disorders, and developmental issues in children. Studies show that children born to teenage couples often experience nutritional problems and cognitive

development delays due to inadequate parenting preparedness.⁴

Parents play a crucial role in preventing early marriage. Factors such as their level of education, economic status, and knowledge of reproductive health have been shown to influence children's marriage decisions. However, recent studies have found that adolescents' own knowledge and attitudes also contribute to this phenomenon.⁵

Based on initial observations at SMPN 2 Singosari, many cases of early marriage occurred due to unplanned pregnancies and social pressure. This study aims to examine the relationship between parental characteristics and adolescents' knowledge and attitudes regarding the risks of early marriage in the area.

2. Methods

This study employed an analytical design with a cross-sectional approach to examine the relationship between parental characteristics (age, education level,

socioeconomic status, and socio-cultural background) and adolescents' knowledge and attitudes regarding early marriage. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 43 students of SMPN 2 Singosari and their parents. Statistical analysis was conducted to measure the extent to which risk factors (parental characteristics) contributed to the outcome variables (adolescents' knowledge and attitudes). This method was chosen to efficiently test causal relationships within a relatively short period of time. Socioeconomic status was classified based on the Malang Regency Regional Minimum Wage (UMR) for 2003, which was IDR 3,370,000. Parents with an income equal to or above the UMR were categorized as having a good income, while those with income below the UMR were classified as having a lower income.

3. Results

In this study, the characteristics of the parents of SMPN 2 Singosari students were analyzed based on age, education level, and socioeconomic status. In addition, the distribution of students' knowledge and attitudes regarding the dangers of early marriage was also examined. The distribution of parental characteristics based on the age of 43 respondents shows that the majority of

parents were aged ≥ 35 years, totaling 38 individuals (88.4%), while those aged < 35 years were 5 individuals (11.6%). In terms of education level, most parents had completed junior or senior high school, with 28 individuals (65.1%), while 11 individuals (25.6%) had completed only primary school. Regarding socioeconomic status, the majority of parents had an income below the Malang Regency Minimum Wage of Rp. 3,370,000, totaling 27 individuals (62.8%), while 16 individuals (37.2%) had an income above the minimum wage. In terms of socio-cultural aspects, only a small number of parents were supportive (4 individuals or 9.3%), while the majority were not supportive (39 individuals or 90.7%).

Based on the research findings, the majority of respondents, 37 out of 43 individuals (86.0%), had a good level of knowledge. The remaining 6 respondents (14.0%) had a fair level of knowledge. In addition, most respondents demonstrated a positive attitude, with 39 individuals (90.7%), while those with a negative attitude totaled 4 individuals (9.3%). These findings indicate a tendency among respondents to have supportive understanding and attitudes toward the topic under study.

Table 1. Distribution of Parental Characteristics and Socio-Cultural Aspects at SMPN 2 Singosari, Singosari District, Malang Regency

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age		
< 35 years	5	11.6
≥ 35 years	38	88.4
Education Level		
Primary School	11	25.6
Junior/Senior High School	28	65.1
\geq Bachelor's degree	4	9.3
Socioeconomic Status		
\geq Regional Minimum Wage of Malang	16	37.2
< Regional Minimum Wage of Malang	27	62.8
Socio-Cultural Background		
Supportive	4	9.3
Not Supportive	39	90.7
Total	43	100

Table 2. Distribution of Students' Knowledge and Attitudes at SMPN 2 Singosari, Singosari District, Malang Regency

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Adolescent Knowledge		
Good	37	86.0
Fair and poor	6	14.0
Adolescent Attitudes		
Positive	39	90.7
Negative	4	9.3
Total	43	100

Table 3. The Relationship Between Parental Characteristics and Students' Knowledge and Attitudes at SMPN 2 Singosari, Singosari District, Malang Regency

Independent Variable	Related Variable	Significance Value (Sig.)
Age		0.024
Education Level	Students' Knowledge at SMPN 2 Singosari	0.731
Socioeconomic Status		0.832
Socio-Cultural Background		0.398
Age		0.012
Education Level	Students' Attitudes at SMPN 2 Singosari	0.307
Socioeconomic Status		0.596
Socio-Cultural Background		0.501

After presenting an overview of the distribution of parental characteristics and the levels of students' knowledge and attitudes, as shown in Table 3, the analysis proceeds to examine the relationship between parental characteristics and adolescents' knowledge and attitudes toward early marriage. The analysis results show that the age variable influences the knowledge and attitudes of students at SMPN 2 Singosari. In contrast, the variables of education level, socioeconomic status, and socio-cultural background do not have any effect on either students' knowledge or attitudes. Therefore, age is the only factor that has an influence on both aspects.

4. Discussion

The Relationship Between Parents' Age and Students' Knowledge

Based on the data analysis, this study reveals a significant relationship between parents' age and students' knowledge about early marriage. A person's age can influence their level of knowledge. Generally, as age increases, the ability to absorb information improves, leading to greater knowledge.

However, there are still a few mothers with low levels of knowledge, which is usually due to limited access to information.⁶

This study differs from the research conducted by Harahap, Amini, and Pamungkas (2018), which stated that there is no relationship between maternal age and knowledge about the impacts of early marriage, particularly regarding reproductive health.⁴ This difference may be due to societal perceptions, especially in rural areas and among parents of adolescents. In addition, other factors may play a more dominant role than age in influencing adolescents' knowledge about early marriage, such as the parents' level of education. The higher the parents' education level, the better the child's knowledge about early marriage. Conversely, a low level of parental education may lead to a lack of understanding of the impacts of early marriage, causing parents to feel no guilt in marrying off their children at any age.⁷

The incidence of early marriage in Singosari District, Malang Regency, is relatively high. Data from the Office of

Religious Affairs (KUA) in Singosari District indicate that early marriage has numerous negative impacts, both physically and socially, such as domestic violence. The immaturity associated with young age affects one's ability to absorb information and poses high risks during pregnancy, which can lead to a recurring pattern across generations.⁵

The Relationship Between Parents' Education Level and Students' Knowledge

The data analysis findings in this study indicate that there is no significant relationship between parents and students' knowledge regarding early marriage. This result is in line with the study conducted by Wardani and Hariyanti (2022) in Gunungrejo Village, Singosari District, which explained that there is no correlation between parents' last level of education and students' knowledge. This may be influenced by several factors, including the level of parental involvement in children's education, parenting styles, and the surrounding environment. Although formal parental education can serve as a strong foundation for a child's development and growth, active parental participation in educational activities such as reading together, helping with school assignments, and encouraging a child's interest in learning can have a significant impact on enhancing children's knowledge, particularly in relation to early marriage.⁶ Parents who raise their children with support and openness can positively influence their cognitive development. Moreover, a nurturing environment and positive cultural values can stimulate children to achieve higher levels of knowledge. This knowledge is further shaped through peer interactions, school experiences, and access to various educational resources.⁷

According to the latest data from *Singosari Subdistrict in Figures 2023* published by the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) of

Malang Regency, the education level of the community in Singosari has shown significant improvement. There has been an increase in the number of formal educational institutions at various levels, ranging from early childhood education to secondary education. However, despite this progress, challenges remain particularly in terms of equal distribution of education quality and public awareness of the importance of higher education, which are influenced by economic conditions, local culture, and limited access to information.⁸

The Relationship Between Parents' Socioeconomic Status and Students' Knowledge

The data analysis results show that there is no significant relationship between parents' socioeconomic status and students' knowledge about early marriage. This finding aligns with the study by Taher (2022), which also concluded that socioeconomic status is not associated with adolescents' knowledge of early marriage, with a p-value of 0.652. The study suggests that a family's economic level does not always correspond to adolescents' level of knowledge regarding early marriage issues. Adolescent knowledge can be shaped through other, more dominant sources such as formal education at school, peer interactions, social media, and personal experiences. Therefore, even those from low-income families can still possess adequate knowledge if they have access to a supportive environment.⁷ This reinforces the notion that the improvement of adolescents' knowledge does not solely depend on the family's economic condition, but is also influenced by access to quality information and education.⁹

According to the *Singosari Subdistrict in Figures 2023* released by the Central Bureau of Statistics of Malang Regency, the average per capita income in Singosari falls within the middle range, with most residents working in the trade and service sectors. However,

economic development in Singosari—driven by the expansion of industrial areas and local tourism—has created greater opportunities for the community to access better education and information. Therefore, although family economic status may vary, students' knowledge about early marriage is not solely influenced by economic factors, but also by a supportive educational and social environment.¹⁰

The Relationship Between Parents' Socio-Cultural Background and Students' Knowledge

The analysis results of this study show that there is no significant relationship between parents' socio-cultural background and students' knowledge about early marriage. This finding is consistent with the study by Harahap, Amini, and Pamungkas (2018), which reported a p-value of 0.058, indicating no correlation between socio-cultural aspects and knowledge about the impacts of early marriage, particularly those related to reproductive health⁴.

Several factors influence early marriage, including education, economic conditions, parental factors, individual factors, and the surrounding environment. A study conducted in Sukadana District showed a p-value of 0.710, suggesting that culture has no influence on early marriage. This is due to the absence of traditions passed down through generations. Most adolescents who engage in early marriage do so because of low education levels, which lead to limited knowledge about the consequences of early marriage.¹¹

In Singosari District, the community tends to adopt modern values and strong religious beliefs. Most families in Singosari prioritize education as a key asset for their children, although economic pressure and certain social norms can still influence decisions regarding early marriage particularly among families with low education levels and

limited access to information.¹² Therefore, socio-cultural factors in Singosari do not directly affect students' knowledge about early marriage, but are more influenced by a combination of educational, economic, and family environment factors.¹³

The Relationship Between Parents' Age and Students' Attitudes

The data analysis in this study reveals a significant relationship between parents' age and students' attitudes toward early marriage. However, these findings need to be examined more deeply by considering other variables that also play a role in shaping such attitudes. This means that while parents' age does contribute to forming adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage, it is not the dominant factor determining those attitudes.¹⁴

As found in the study conducted by Gito, Direja, and Komalasari (2024), although parents' ages vary, they do not directly shape their children's attitudes toward the issue of early marriage.¹⁵ Similarly, a study by Delyka, Yulita, and Valentina (2023) also showed that parents' education level and their active involvement in supporting their children's growth and development have a stronger influence than age alone.⁹

Students' attitudes toward early marriage are more strongly influenced by the norms and values taught within the family, parenting styles, social environment, and access to information. Children from various parental age backgrounds may hold similar views on early marriage if they grow up in an environment that provides understanding about its risks and consequences. In fact, parental involvement in open discussions about life values, education, and their children's future tends to play a greater role in shaping adolescents' attitudes.¹⁶

The Relationship Between Parents' Education Level and Students' Attitudes

The data analysis in this study shows that there is no significant relationship between parents and students' attitudes toward early marriage. This may be due to several factors, including the pattern of communication between parents and children, stronger environmental influences, and the low level of parental involvement in reproductive health education.¹⁷

This finding differs from the study by Indah, Boekoesoe, and Wulansari (2023), which stated that there is a relationship between maternal education and the incidence of early marriage. It was found that parents with a low level of education are 9.821 times more likely to marry off their children at an early age. Parents with a higher education level, particularly those who graduated from college, tend to be more likely to prevent early marriage compared to parents with education below the college level¹⁶.

The Relationship Between Parents' Socioeconomic Status and Students' Attitudes

Based on the analysis results, there was no relationship found between parents' socioeconomic status and students' attitudes toward early marriage. Adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage are more likely shaped by personal experiences or social environmental influences rather than parental income levels. Their views can be formed through family experiences, peer interactions, or exposure to social media. A study conducted in Babakan Village, Ciparay District, Bandung Regency reported a p-value of 0.1, indicating no significant relationship between parental income and adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage¹⁸.

The analysis results from a study conducted by Wardani (2023) also indicated

that there was no relationship between parental income and the attitudes of students at MTS AL-Maarif 03 in Singosari District, Malang Regency.⁸ This is due to several factors, including cultural values, awareness, social environment, and parental involvement. Children's attitudes toward early marriage are influenced by various factors that are not necessarily related to their parents' income level. The values and norms instilled within the family from an early age, as well as the cultural beliefs upheld, play a significant role in shaping a child's perspective. Moreover, awareness about early marriage can develop equally across different economic levels, as access to information and education has become broader and more accessible.¹⁸ The social environment such as personal experiences, interactions with peers, and exposure to social media also contributes to shaping children's perspectives on this issue. Equally important, parental involvement in providing guidance and engaging in discussions about the values and consequences of early marriage often has a greater influence than the family's economic condition itself.¹⁴

The Relationship Between Parents' Socio-Cultural Background and Students' Attitudes

Based on the analysis results, no relationship was found between parents' socio-cultural background and students' attitudes toward early marriage. This finding is consistent with the study by Ermawati and Hakim (2021) in Sindetanyar Village, Besuk District, Probolinggo Regency, which showed no significant relationship between parents' socio-cultural factors and adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage, as indicated by a p-value greater than 0.05. The study suggests that even though adolescents may live in a social environment that culturally supports early marriage, this does not

necessarily influence their attitudes toward it.¹⁴

This study reinforces the view that adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage are not solely shaped by surrounding customs or social norms, but can also be influenced by other factors such as education, personal experiences, and exposure to information through media. Therefore, interventions to prevent early marriage must involve a broader approach and should not focus solely on changing socio-cultural values.⁵

5. Conclusion

Based on the research conducted at SMPN 2 Singosari regarding the relationship between parental characteristics and adolescents' knowledge and attitudes toward the dangers of early marriage, it was found that most parents were aged ≥ 35 years, had a junior or senior high school education, earned \leq the Malang Regency Minimum Wage, and generally did not provide support in the socio-cultural aspect. Overall, adolescents' knowledge and attitudes regarding the dangers of early marriage were categorized as good and positive. The analysis showed that parents' age was related to adolescents' knowledge and attitudes toward early marriage, while education level, socioeconomic status, and socio-cultural background did not show a significant relationship with either.

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