



Empowerment Women of Mekarmanik Village to Prevent Early through Balai Prima Women's School in 2020-2023

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Received : July 19, 2024

Revised : September 16, 2024

Accepted : October 18, 2024

Online : December 28, 2024

Abstract

This research was motivated by the rampant phenomenon of early marriage in Indonesia, which has become a complex and controversial social issue. Early marriage was always associated with beliefs and traditions in a region with diverse cultures and religions. This study analyzes efforts to prevent early marriage in Mekarmanik Village, Cimenyan District, Bandung Regency through women's empowerment. The program used is the Balai Prima girls' school, which provides non-formal education for adolescent girls aged 13-18 years. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method, focusing on data collection and analysis, to shed light on the phenomenon of early marriage in local social, cultural, and economic contexts. The results show that non-formal education and women's empowerment can increase awareness about women's rights and the risks of early marriage, as well as provide practical skills that aid decision-making. The implementation of this program is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in terms of gender equality and improving the quality of education. Therefore, it is important to address early marriage, which involves education, empowerment, and social change.

Keywords: *Early marriage, Women's empowerment, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*

INTRODUCTION

Early marriage is a phenomenon that involves the marriage of one or both couples who are still at a relatively young age, usually under the marriage age set by the law of the country. In Indonesia, the phenomenon of early marriage has become a complex and controversial social issue. This is a common phenomenon because many people have done it. Early marriage involves factors such as cultural norms, religion, and socioeconomic conditions that play a role in shaping the dynamics of this phenomenon. This practice has resulted in many early marriages in Indonesia (Maulana, 2023).

The age range from 10 to 19 years includes people classified as teenagers. This period is often considered an important transition period from childhood to adulthood. During this period, adolescents undergo significant physical, emotional, and social changes that can affect their overall development. Therefore, adolescents are particularly vulnerable to various health and social problems, such as peer pressure, mental health issues, and risky behaviors. Adequate mentoring and support are essential to help students overcome these challenges and reach their full potential (Mental Health of Adolescents, 2024).

Meanwhile, referring to Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage in Indonesia, the marriage requirement for KUA is a minimum age of 19 years (Undang-undang (UU) tentang Perubahan atas Undang-undang Nomor 1 Tahun 1974 tentang Perkawinan, 2019). Therefore, the marriage of a man and a woman under the age of 19 is considered early. The existence of the regulation should be followed by what has been determined, but there are still many violations of the regulation. Various reasons have been argued for the fact that child marriage must occur from an early age. Finally, it causes early marriage to occur even though it is done secretly from the government (Kemenag, 2023).

Early marriage is always associated with the beliefs and traditions of the region. Including Indonesia is a country with diverse cultures and religions, which causes norms related to marriage to

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differ among regions and community groups. Early marriage is often associated with cultural factors where in some areas, especially in rural areas, marriage at a young age is considered a tradition that must be lived in order to maintain family honor and fulfill social responsibilities. In addition, religion has a strong influence on marriage. Some religious beliefs support early marriage as a form of devotion to God (Pranita & Sumartiningtyas, 2021).

Economic factors also influence early marriage. In some areas, low socioeconomic conditions cause families to encourage early marriage as a way to reduce the economic burden on families. With the hope that, after marriage, they can live comfortably with their partners. In addition, the education factor also plays an important role, where limited access to formal education can affect students' awareness of individual rights, including their right to make life choices. Low education levels can also impact low gender awareness. Women in rural areas may lack knowledge about their rights and the importance of getting an education before marriage (Pranita & Sumartiningtyas, 2021).

In some contexts, society's mindset can encourage or even force women to marry at a very young age, often before they are physically and emotionally ready. Factors such as cultural traditions that consider marriage to be a woman's primary goal, a difficult economy, and an emphasis on traditional gender roles can influence people's views of early marriage. Finally, it imposes the will of tradition on minors. In addition, religious norms can also have a significant influence, depending on how religious teachings are interpreted and interpreted by society (Safitri, 2022).

However, the social and educational changes can also affect people's mindsets toward early marriage. As education and awareness about women's rights increase, society may become more critical of the practice of early marriage and more accepting of the view that women have the right to pursue education and careers before marriage. On the other hand, economic factors and uncertainty can also drive early marriage. Deterioration in the family economy is a factor that results in a person deciding to marry early (Safitri, 2022).

Early marriage has a significant impact on the well-being of women and children. In many cases, early marriage can stop women's education, limit career options, and increase maternal and child health risks. In some societies, early marriage is associated with rigid gender role norms and inequality. Therefore, understanding the community's mindset toward early marriage can help identify the root of the problem and build a more holistic intervention strategy (Noor, 2022).

As an example, Mekarmanik Village in Cimenyan District, West Java Regency, is a rural village that faces similar challenges. The typical social, cultural, and economic conditions in this village can affect the community's view of female marriage. Although laws have been implemented to raise the minimum age of marriage, the practice of early marriage still occurs. There is one non-formal education program implemented in Mekarmanik Village, namely the Balai Prima Women's School, which has a curriculum with the aim of preventing early marriage. This program was attended by adolescent girls aged 13-18 years with junior much high school education levels. In addition to providing non-formal education, Balai Prima Women's School also strives to empower women in Mekarmanik Village. The implementation of the Balai Prima Women's School program is in line with the fifth Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely achieving gender equality and empowering women. This can be seen from several programs carried out.

Therefore, the formulation of the research problem was prepared to determine and analyze efforts to prevent early marriage in Mekarmanik Village, Cimenyan District, Bandung Regency through nonformal education. The phenomenon of early marriage has become a complex and controversial social issue in Indonesia. It has always been associated with the beliefs and traditions of certain regions. Early marriage has also had a significant impact on the welfare of women and children.

Several previous studies on early marriage from various contexts have been quite numerous, but no research has specifically explored how to prevent early marriage by empowering women through non-formal education in girls' schools. Therefore, this study provides valuable insights into how cultural, social, economic, health, and technological factors can affect society in preventing early

marriage.

This research will answer 2 questions, namely: first, what is the strategy carried out by Balai Prima Women's School as an effort to prevent early marriage in Mekarmanik Village, Cimenyan District, Bandung Regency. Second, what is the impact of the Balai Prima Women's School program for the adolescent girls? The purpose of this study is to determine the strategy of the Balai Prima Women's School in preventing early marriage and the impact that adolescent girls experience after participating in the program to prevent early marriage associated with women's empowerment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

a. Early Marriage

According to Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage Article 1 which reads "Marriage is only allowed if a man and a woman have reached the age of 19 (nineteen) years". In this case, the minimum age of marriage for women is the same as the minimum age of marriage for men, which is 19 (nineteen) years old. Therefore, if they are minors, it is called an early marriage.

According to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia in 2014, Marriage is a marriage contract/promise made in the name of God Almighty, which is the beginning of an agreement between the bride and groom to give peace to each other (*sakina*) by developing a relationship on the basis of mutual love and love (*mawaddah wa rahmah*). Marriage is the beginning of family formation. According to the WHO in 2010, early marriage is a marriage performed by a couple or one of the couples is still categorized as children or adolescents under the age of 18 (Kemenkes RI, 2015).

In general, early marriage is a good institution to bind two people of the opposite sex who are still teenagers in one family bond. Adolescents are children who are in a transition period between childhood and adulthood, during which they experience rapid changes in all fields. They are no longer children, both in body shape, attitude, and ways of thinking and acting, but they are also not adult adults.

Based on some of the definitions above, it can be concluded that early marriage is when a child is still a teenager or under the age of 19. Factors leading to early marriage:

- a. Socio-cultural, customary, and cultural factors in some regions still lead to an understanding of arranged marriage by parents.
- b. Knowledge: A person's knowledge level influence behavior.
- c. Education, low individual education due to dropping out of school, family education level, and the education level of society as a whole can encourage early marriage.
- d. Promiscuity, Young marriage occurs due to a lack of parental supervision, which results in both children committing sexual acts without parental knowledge.
- e. Economically, early marriage occurs because families live below the poverty line. This is done to ease the burden on parents.
- f. Family communication between parents and children, such as lack of control and attention from parents, are the reasons why children decide to get married early.

The impact of early marriage:

1. Physical impact: Women who give birth at age 20 years have a high risk of maternal and newborn risks.
2. The psychological impact arises because teenagers are not ready to get married and have babies, which will result in anxiety, stress, and even depression when living in a household and taking care of their babies.
3. Social Impact: Early marriage is a marriage that is still vulnerable and unstable. At the age of adolescence, emotions are still very unstable, and adolescents are not able to socialize and adapt.

4. **Biological Impact:** The reproductive organs are still in the process of growing toward maturity, so they are not ready to have sexual intercourse, especially until pregnancy and childbirth occur.
5. **The Impact of Early Marriage on Pregnancy** Women who become pregnant in their teens tend to have a risk of pregnancy due to a lack of knowledge and unpreparedness in dealing with their pregnancy. Maternal mortality in 26 pregnant women under the age of 20 turned out to be 2-5 times higher than deaths at the age of 20-29 years

From previous studies, it has been stated that early marriage often occurs because of a lack of education, poverty, and social norms and pressures. Therefore, the empowerment program through Sekolah Perempuan Balai Prima focuses on increasing women's awareness and knowledge about their rights, the importance of education, and the health and social risks of early marriage. In addition, the program provides practical skills and psychosocial support, which aims to strengthen women's position in decision-making regarding their future, including the decision to postpone marriage (Hermambang et al., 2021).

In a study in Zambia, early marriage was influenced by factors operating at the individual and community levels. Strengthening sexual and reproductive health programs, especially for people with poor access to education, is essential. Working women are less likely to experience an early marriage. This demonstrates that women's empowerment can help overcome early marriage (Phiri et al., 2023).

b. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are global and national commitments made to improve people's welfare. 17 major goals are widely recognized, and these goals serve as a general guide for countries around the world. These goals cover various aspects of development, including poverty alleviation, health, education, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and peace. The SDGs reflect international cooperation to address global challenges and achieve a vision of a more just, sustainable, and inclusive world. The implementation of the SDGs involves cross-sectoral cooperation and the participation of all parties, including governments, the private sector, civil society, and international institutions (UNDP, n.d.).

In the social development pillar, the division of women's roles often puts women's impulsiveness in direct contact with the objects they handle. Gender equality is included in the 5th pillar of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is an important pillar of social development. The gender equality target to be achieved by 2030 involves efforts to end all forms of discrimination against women, stop harmful practices such as early marriage and sexual violence, ensure women's full participation in political fields such as government and parliament, provide optimal health services for women, including reproductive health and maternal and child safety, and expand the use and access to information technology for women. Gender equality is directed at empowering all women and girls, recognizing the right of every woman to build herself (BAPPENAS, 2016).

Under this pillar, there are a set of targets that cover areas such as education, employment, health, and participation in decision-making. First, this goal emphasizes the importance of equal access to education for women. This includes quality primary and secondary education and opportunities to progress to higher education without gender discrimination. In addition, this pillar also seeks to end practices that hinder women's access to education, such as marriage and the sacrifice of education to help at home (BAPPENAS, 2016).

Second, this pillar emphasizes the importance of equal opportunities for workers. This involves removing barriers that prevent women from entering the job market and ensuring that they are paid the same wages as men. In addition, this pillar also seeks to end jobs that harm women, such as informal and unstable work. Third, it emphasizes the need to provide equal access to health services and reproductive rights for women and girls. These include better access to reproductive health services, prevention and control of infectious diseases, and support for women's mental health and

emotional well-being (BAPPENAS, 2016).

Finally, this pillar focuses on decision-making at the household, community, and government levels. This includes underlining the importance of providing equal participation for women in the active participation of women in decision-making processes that affect their lives and increasing women's representation in political institutions and governments. By achieving these goals, it is hoped that a fairer, more inclusive, and sustainable society will be created for all, where women have the same opportunity to develop and contribute (BAPPENAS, 2016).

One of the main goals of the SDGs is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The empowerment program in Mekarmanik Village through the Balai Prima Girls' School directly contributes to this goal by providing education and training that raises awareness about women's rights, reduces gender inequality, and increases women's participation in decision-making. In addition, the prevention of early marriage also supports the targets of the SDGs, such as improving the quality of education (SDG 4) and health (SDG 3), as well as poverty eradication (SDG 1) (Sudirman & Susilawaty, 2022).

c. Women's Empowerment

Women's empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building for greater participation, greater power, and oversight over transformational decision-making and action to produce greater equality between women and men. In the discussion of the 2008 National Development Strategy Formulation Team, Nursahbani Katjasungkana stated that four important indicators are needed to achieve effective equality and encourage women's empowerment:

1. Access

The purpose of equal access is to ensure that women have the same opportunities as men to take advantage of the resources available in terms of career and personal life. In addition, it entails removing barriers that prevent women from accessing such things as gender stereotypes and structural discrimination. Therefore, equal access is the basis for providing equal opportunities for both sexes (Nugroho, 2008).

2. Participation

Emphasizing the importance of women's participation in decision-making and resource use. Active participation in decision-making processes increases the effectiveness of resource utilization and helps to build more inclusive and representative policies. In addition, women's involvement in every aspect of decision-making promotes fairer and more balanced policies, which in turn accelerates the general progress toward gender equality.

3. Control

The importance of this control lies in empowering women to influence outcomes that affect their lives and communities. By having control, women can ensure that resources are used fairly and result in better well-being.

4. Benefit

Emphasizing that the benefits of resource utilization should be enjoyed equally by men and women. This ensures that they will benefit from increased resources and development.

Based on this principle of equality, empowerment is essential to build a more civilized world where everyone, regardless of gender, has the same opportunity to develop and contribute to society (Nugroho, 2008). Empowerment is the transformation of power relations between men and women at four levels: family, society, market, and state. Women's position will increase only when they can be independent and able to control decisions related to their lives.

Women's Empowerment Goals

The purpose of women's empowerment is to build women's awareness of gender equality so that they can develop their potential, so that women can be independent and participate in development. According to Nugroho (2008), the objectives of the women's empowerment program are as follows:

- a. Increasing women's ability to involve themselves in development programs through active participation (subjects) so that they are not only the object of development as has happened so far.
- b. Improving women's leadership skills, increasing bargaining positions, and involvement in every development, both as planners, implementers, and monitoring and evaluation activities.
- c. Improving women's ability to manage household-scale businesses, small industries, and large industries to support the increase in household needs, as well as opening productive and independent job opportunities.
- d. Increasing the role and function of women's organizations at the local level as a forum for women's empowerment so that they can be actively involved in development programs in the area where they live.

Meanwhile, the objectives of women's empowerment are as follows:

- a. Building existence, in this case, the existence of women. Women should not always be in a downward position. Women have the opportunity to develop themselves.
- b. Motivating women to have the ability or empowerment to determine their life choices through the process of dialog.
- c. Foster women's awareness of equality and their position in both the public and domestic sectors.

Women's empowerment strategy

Women's empowerment is a strategic way to increase women's potential and role in both the public and domestic spheres. Women can be empowered through the following strategies:

- a. Dismantling the myth of women as complements in the household.
- b. Provide several skills to women. This strategy makes women also productive and not dependent on men.
- c. Provide the widest possible opportunity for women to participate in or pursue education as widely as possible.

Women's empowerment measures

The stages or steps in women's empowerment are as follows:

- a. The stage of awareness and behavior formation toward conscious and caring behavior so that the participants feel a need to increase their capacity
- b. The stages of ability transformation are in the form of knowledge insights and skill proficiency to provide basic skills so that they can play a role in the development of
- c. The stage of improving intellectual ability and skill proficiency to form initiatives and innovative abilities that lead to independence

The research framework in the context of sustainable and structured women's empowerment aims to create profound social change so that women can more actively participate in various aspects of life and avoid harmful practices, such as early marriage. Therefore, Balai Prima Women's School is providing education and skills training to increase women's capacity and confidence. The program not only provides knowledge about women's rights and the risks of early marriage but also equips participants with practical skills and economic opportunities. This trend is expected to increase women's autonomy and bargaining power in decision-making, both in the context of family and society.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive research method. Lexy J. Moleong, in her book "Qualitative Research Methodology" (2004), describes and explains a phenomenon or event in the context of nature. The focus is on the collection and analysis of qualitative data, such as text, images, and sound recordings, to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study (Moleong, 2004).

Based on the data obtained, early marriage in Mekarmanik Village, Cimenyan District, Bandung Regency is still rampant. Therefore, qualitative descriptive methods are used because the researcher wants to obtain a more accurate and in-depth picture (information) related to the context of the present problem. The data collection technique used was observation, interviews with Village Heads, Community Members, and Participants of Balai Prima Women's School in Mekarmanik Village, Bandung Regency, West Java, Indonesia and documentation. The results of the research were analyzed in a qualitative descriptive manner. The participants of the Balai Prima Women's School who are the object of the research are adolescent girls with an age range of 13-18 years and selected based on their activeness and understanding of the material during the implementation of the program in the period of 2022-2023.

The analysis and validation of research data is carried out by means of data triangulation, where several different data sources, such as interviews, observations, documents, and archives, are dug deeper and then analyzed using theory. Qualitative data, such as interviews and field notes, were analyzed to identify themes and patterns that were relevant to the research objectives. This analysis technique allowed us to capture the nuances and complexities of women's training in Mekarmanik Village. Through an in-depth analysis, the researchers could understand how empowerment programs have influenced participants' attitudes and behaviors toward early marriage.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Phenomenon of Early Marriage in Mekarmanik

Cases of early marriage that occurred in Mekarmanik Village until 2023 occurred at an average age of 13-18 years. According to *the World Health Organization* (WHO), individuals aged 10–19 years are classified into the adolescent category (Adolescent and Young Adult Health, 2024). Meanwhile, referring to Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage in Indonesia, the marriage requirement for KUA is a minimum age of 19 years. Therefore, marriage at the age of 13-18 years is categorized as early marriage (Cahyaningsih et al., 2021).

The amount of marriage data for people under the age of 20 in Mekarmanik Village from 2020 to 2023 is presented in the table below:

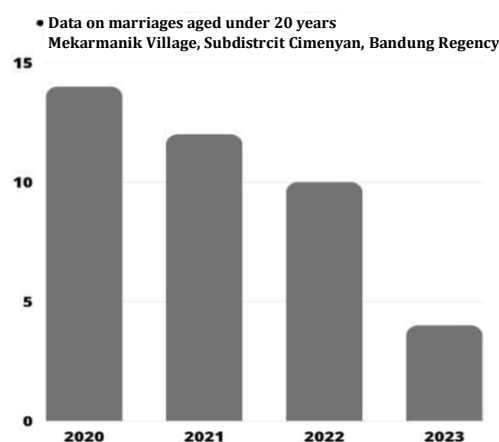


Figure 1. The amount of marriages old in Mekarmanik Village

Although it is decreasing every year, cases of early marriage must be overcome together because it can increase again if public understanding of the impact of early marriage is still lacking. The insistence of parents on the grounds of avoiding promiscuity and the cultural system encourages early marriage. Based on the results of the survey and interviews with the TP PKK cadres of Mekarmanik Village, the factors that affect the occurrence of early marriage are as follows:

a. Lack of public understanding of early marriage

The impact of early marriage can affect physical health (health of women's reproductive organs), psychological (mental), public attitudes (views on the status of the elderly), and child development (parenting patterns). Another impact related to administration is the prohibition of the issuance of marriage books and child birth certificates. If a deed is issued, it only includes the name of the biological mother.

b. Cultural traditions that consider marriage to be the primary goal of women

In society, there is still the idea that women's goal is to get married. Therefore, education becomes unimportant because after marriage, a woman becomes a wife who takes care of household or household affairs. If a woman does not get married immediately, it is considered a cultural violation.

c. Low economic well-being

Early marriage in Mekarmanik Village is generally caused by poor economic conditions. Parents and adolescent girls marry early in the hope that the burden of economic dependence will shift to their husbands.

d. The low skills of teenage girls

During school, adolescent girls are not equipped with the knowledge to improve their life skills. Therefore, after graduating from high school, the jobs they get on average are low-income and they are unable to open a business independently.

e. The emphasis on traditional gender roles can influence people's views about early marriage.

Traditional gender thinking still places women as second-class individuals who are in charge of household chores such as cooking, caring for children and husbands, and domestic help. In addition, men are employed in public spaces. This ultimately causes women to think about not continuing higher education or looking for a job because their thinking is limited to working in the domestic realm and serving their husbands.

Several programs carried out by TP PKK cadres to prevent early marriage have been implemented through Working Group 1 (Youth), Working Group 2 (Creative Economy), and Working Group 4 (Health). However, on the other hand, this program could not avoid the occurrence of early marriage in Mekarmanik Village. Counseling to residents about the impact of early marriage has also been carried out, but this has not been evenly and thoroughly conducted in Mekarmanik Village. Counseling to residents about the impact of early marriage is also carried out, but it is not evenly and thoroughly distributed in Mekarmanik Village, so early marriage still occurs in early 2023.

Impact of Early Marriage

Early marriage has a serious impact on women. Some effects of early marriage are as follows:

1) Physical and mental health

Early marriage has a significant impact on the physical and mental health of individuals. Physically, women who marry at a very young age often experience serious physical impacts. A uterus that is not mature enough in young women can increase the risk of pregnancy complications, such as premature birth or birth with defects. In addition, children born to very young mothers are at risk of stunting because of a lack of adequate care and nutrition during pregnancy. Mentally, early marriage can result in significant emotional instability. This can negatively impact the parenting of children. For example, parents who are young and emotionally immature may find it difficult to provide a calm, harmonious, and stable family environment that allows children to grow and develop optimally. As a result, children from early marriage may experience impaired emotional and psychological

development due to the lack of support and attention that are necessary for their mental well-being. Thus, the physical and mental health impacts of early marriage reinforce the urgency to reduce this practice for the well-being and future of the younger generation.

2) Education

Education is essential for everyone, which is why the Indonesia government has designed a 9-year compulsory school program. However, due to low economic limitations, education is often neglected because students cannot afford all the school supplies. In the people of Mekarmanik Village, education is still considered under-estimated, which can be seen because of the large number of children who have just graduated from elementary school (*SD*) or junior high school (*SMP*). Parents' lack of knowledge about education, so often, resign and accept their children's decision to drop out of school, which results in low levels of education. In addition, it has an impact on limited learning abilities. One of the most striking consequences is the discontinuation of formal education. When a child or teenager gets married at a very young age, they are likely to be forced to leave school to focus on their new role as a spouse or parent.

3) Psychological

Early marriage also increases the risk of Domestic Violence (KDRT). Couples who marry at a very young age tend to be emotionally and socially ill-prepared to deal with conflict and stress, which can lead to domestic violence both physically and psychologically. Divorce rates also tend to be higher among couples who marry at a very young age. Due to their lack of emotional maturity and experience in managing relationships, couples who marry early often face immense pressure, which can ultimately lead to divorce.

4) Social

Women who undergo early marriage will experience social impacts because currently, girls are still trying to find their identity and adjust to the physiological changes of their body toward adulthood. This can cause women to be easily influenced by their environment. Often, married women are driven by the desire to appear to exist in society without considering the impact of early marriage.

5) Biology

Biologically, early marriage has an impact, especially on women. These include the loss of premature female reproductive cells, pregnancies at risk due to biological unpreparedness, the risk of infant death because women give birth under the age of 20, and the risk of physical and sexual violence.

6) Pregnancy

Pregnancy experienced by young women can have several negative effects, including high blood pressure, anemia due to iron deficiency, risk of premature delivery, risk of death during childbirth, risk of low baby weight, and risk of sexually transmitted diseases that ultimately harm the fetus.

Women's empowerment strategy in the Balai Prima Women's School curriculum

The case of early marriage that often occurs in Mekarmanik Village is a problem raised by the team as a basis for program planning. The potential of Mekarmanik Village is in the form of the existence of 107 Cadres of the Family Welfare Empowerment Driving Team (TP PKK), the existence of programs run by the TP PKK of Mekarmanik Village, especially in the Field of Working Group 1 (Youth), Field of Working Group 2 (Creative Economy), and Field of Working Group 4 (Health), Young Karangan who are quite active in Mekarmanik Village amounting to 35 people, the number of female adolescent population of 817 people, and the existence of a village hall that can be used as a location for girls' schools. It is hoped that it can be a supporter of the prevention of early marriage cases in Mekarmanik Village.

In the prevention of early marriage in Mekarmanik Village, based on the results of the survey conducted, the solution prepared was to carry out a women's empowerment program through non-formal institutions with the theme of women's schools under the name of the Center for Creative,

Innovative, and Independent Women, abbreviated as Balai Prima. With the existence of a girls' school (Balai Prima), the community, especially the girls in Mekarmanik Village, has undertaken activities to improve their life skills, be able to earn income independently, and be involved in the village development process. Therefore, the desire to get married early is not a priority for young women in Mekarmanik Village.

This program is divided into several classes: the Healthy Youth Class, the Family Love Youth Class, the Creative, Innovative, and Independent Youth Class, the Information Technology Advanced Youth Class, and the Alert Youth Class. The learning methods applied in girls' schools include approaches that emphasize active involvement, hands-on experience, and practical application. Participants engage in group discussions to share experiences and understandings and discuss concepts or skills taught, as well as real projects to develop practical skills of the *Peserta Balai Prima*.

Table 1. Class Classification in Balai Prima

Class Classification	Lesson
Healthy teen classroom	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adolescent health 2. Getting to Know the Reproductive Organs 3. Reproductive Health
Family love teen class	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding the 8 functions of the family 2. The role of women in the family 3. Understanding the impact of early marriage 4. Maturity of Marital Age
Creative, innovative, and independent youth classes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Role of Women in Development 2. Organic and inorganic waste processing training 3. Hydroponic training and bamboo crafts 4. Public speaking training 5. Business plan training
Tech-savvy teen class	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Photo product training 2. Digital marketing training
Martial arts classes for teens	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Types of harassment and violence against women 2. Practice martial arts training

The implementation team has designed a structured non-formal learning curriculum to prevent early marriage as well as the existence of Digital Learning Resources, such as e-books, learning videos, and interactive simulations, that make the learning materials more interesting, and easy to understand. Improving the knowledge and life skills of adolescent girls through learning in girls' schools, which are divided into healthy, family-loving, creative, innovative, and independent adolescent classes, information technology-proficient adolescent classes, and standby adolescent classes. Improving knowledge and life skills in accordance with the curriculum so that they can earn income independently, can be involved in the village development process, and the desire to marry early is not a priority for young girls in Mekarmanik Village.

The results of interviews with resource persons in the technology-proficient youth class revealed that the participants gained new knowledge in the procedure for taking product photos using a mobile phone camera. Previously, they only used it for personal photo purposes, but after this class was taken, they wanted to try to sell products online using their own photos. Then, in the healthy adolescent class, the participants stated that they gained new knowledge related to women's reproductive health. The simple thing they just know is the duration of changing underwear and pads while menstruating. Meanwhile, in the creative, innovative, and independent youth class, the participants are motivated to continue their education to a higher level, that is, higher education. This is because of the previous

customs in the village; adolescent girls were often directed to work or get married. Education is not important because you will depend on your husband when you are married. However, after attending classes at Balai Prima Women's School, they have another view that women's rights in the field of education can also be achieved.

The Balai Prima team held a post-test in the form of an interview on November 12, 2023, to measure the success of the program. This post-test assesses the extent to which participants have understood and applied the knowledge and skills they have learned in each class. The results of this evaluation are also used as a reference to identify areas that require improvement and development, as well as to assess the impact of the program on improving participants' awareness, skills, and attitudes during the learning process.

In the Balai Prima class activities, one of the topics that participants are most interested in is technology exploration, especially in the use of e-commerce platforms. According to Riska Rahmawati, an active participant, this activity is very useful and open-up new opportunities. Previously, participants only understood e-commerce platforms as a tool for shopping, but through this class, they realized that the platform can also be used to create businesses from home. The explanation from Mr. Hendar Rubedo, a speaker, was clearly and easily understood, especially regarding how to become an affiliate on an e-commerce platform. Participants learn that they can generate revenue by promoting other people's products through their accounts and earn a commission from each generated sale, as is often found in creator content on the TikTok platform.

In addition, participants were taught practical skills such as the use of Canva features for product design and product photography techniques, which are important in marketing. These classes provide in-depth insights and skills that can be applied immediately, so participants feel like they are being given a real tool to grow. According to Riska, after attending this class, many new skills are formed, such as the use of e-commerce technology, visual editing, and other digital skills. The process of becoming an affiliate on an e-commerce platform not only teaches you how to sell products but also how to maximize the potential of technology and social media to support independent ventures.

Balai Prima also held a Healthy Youth and Family Love class to increase participants' understanding of women's health. According to some participants, this class really helped them understand important health issues, especially related to reproductive health and the importance of maintaining physical and mental balance. Rizqiana Nur Muiz stated that through this class, she began to better understand the importance of taking care of herself and her reproductive organs and how a healthy lifestyle has a direct impact on women's quality of life. Putri Nabila explained the material in an easy-to-understand way, ranging from topics such as menstrual health to the important role of family in supporting the health of adolescent girls. Participants were taught how to maintain health in practical and easy-to-apply ways, both in daily life and in relationships with family. This class not only provides knowledge, but also provides a deeper understanding of how women can take care of their health independently, with family support as an important factor in long-term well-being.

The Balai Prima program motivates participants, most whom are junior and senior high school girls, to continue their education to a higher level. One of the main goals of this program is to raise awareness of the importance of education, especially in areas with high rates of early marriage. Through inspirational sessions, the participants were encouraged to see education as the key to open-up opportunities for a better and wider future. Maharani said that after attending this class, she was even more motivated to continue her education, as her understanding of the long-term impact of higher education on her life and career became clearer. Mrs. Sintia Catur, as a speaker in the prima hall classes, also shared stories and experiences about how education can change lives, as well as how access to higher education can provide opportunities to achieve bigger dreams. This class teaches participants not only to focus on short-term needs and plan-for-the-future with a broader vision. With a deeper understanding of the importance of education, the participants, despite coming from challenging environments, began to see the important value of delaying early marriage and pursuing

education as a long-term investment. This program not only builds awareness but also provides emotional and mental encouragement for participants to strive to achieve higher education levels.

The Balai Prima class also focuses on reducing early marriage by encouraging participants to postpone marriage and continue their education. In Mekarmanik Village, which has a very high rate of early marriage, this class is an important forum in changing the mindset of participants, especially in facing the patriarchal culture that remains strong in the community. Ilda Detara stated that after taking this class, she began to understand that early marriage can limit future opportunities, both in terms of education and career. Furthermore, the participants were given an understanding of the dangers of early marriage, especially for minors, such as physical and mental health risks, including pregnancy complications and the inability to manage a stable home life at an immature age.

This class also involves the parents of the participants to change their mindsets regarding patriarchal culture, which is often a driver of early marriage. The speakers effectively explained that women's education and independence have a positive impact not only on individuals but also on families and society. With a better understanding of the negative impacts of early marriage, including the risk of dropping out of school and economic hardship, participants felt more motivated to focus on self-development and attaining higher education. The Balai Prima program succeeded in instilling awareness that postponing marriage is not only about rejecting tradition, but also about maintaining physical and mental health and opening the door to a brighter, independent, and more opportunistic future.

From the results of interviews with participants in Sekolah Perempuan Balai Prima, we obtained the following information:

- a. Their soft skills improved,
- b. Understanding women's health is improving,
- b. Motivation to continue higher education
- c. The desire to get married early is greatly reduced.

The existence of the Balai Prima Women's School curriculum is an implementation of women's empowerment, especially for adolescent girls in Mekarmanik Village. Women's empowerment is an important strategy in increasing the role of women to hone their potential to be more independent and work. Awareness of the role of women is beginning to develop, which is manifested in the approach of the Balai Prima women's school program. The purpose of women's empowerment is to build women's awareness of gender equality so that they can develop their potential, so that women can be independent and participate in development.

In a study conducted by Adinda Hermambang titled "Factors that affect early marriage in Indonesia," the economic level in rural areas is lower than in urban areas, making people tend to receive low education due to the lack of money. The working status of the spouse who has a significant influence also indicates that the economic burden of supporting the daughter is transferred to her husband, who works. This encourages early marriage because marrying a daughter to a more capable person reduces the family's economic burden compared to paying for her to continue her education (Hermambang et al., 2021). Meanwhile, in the research conducted this time, the author wants to find a solution to the problem of early marriage triggered by cultural factors, lack of understanding, and low economic conditions by empowering women and improving their life skills in various fields through women's schools.

In a study conducted by Million Phiri on early marriage in Zambia, it was observed that, despite a decline in trends over the years, the prevalence of child marriage remained high. Factors influencing child marriage operate at both individual and community levels. Strengthening sexual and reproductive health programs is essential, particularly for communities with limited access to education, to improve reproductive health outcomes, such as age at first sexual intercourse and age at first birth among women. Further research is needed to gain a better understanding of the findings reported in this study and to explore the sociocultural and religious influences that may explain some

of the unaccounted societal effects on children (Phiri et al., 2023). Meanwhile, this research aims to address the issue of early marriage caused by cultural factors, lack of understanding, and low economic conditions by empowering women and enhancing their life skills through specialized women's education programs. This effort also focused on reducing the desire for early marriage and encouraging participants to pursue higher education levels.

From the research that has been conducted, the researcher observes a difference with previous reference research. In the previous study, the data presented were in the form of factors that cause early marriage and the impact that women will experience. However, in this study, information was presented about real efforts to prevent early marriage through several programs or classes at Balai Prima Women's School with a target audience of adolescent girls aged 13-18 years. This finding can be an input for stakeholders in areas with high rates of early marriage.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explains the strategy of Balai Prima Women's School in preventing early marriage in Mekarmanik Village, Cimenyan District, Bandung Regency through non-formal education programs, which are divided into 5 namely Healthy Youth Class, Family Love Youth Class, Creative, Innovative, and Independent Youth Class, Information Technology Advanced Youth Class, and Alert Youth Class. From these classes, the form of women's empowerment can be analyzed so that it can have an impact on the participants in the form of increasing their soft skills, knowledge, and motivation to continue education to a higher level.

The novelty of this research can be seen from the existence of a girls' school program that specifically provides strategic steps to change the community's mindset toward early marriage among adolescent girls. These steps represent an effort to make the public understand the importance of gender equality in various fields, especially health, education, and the economy.

Theoretically, this study analyzes how women's empowerment is implemented through women's schools. Practically, this research can provide input for stakeholders, especially local governments, to create similar programs to change people's mindsets about early marriage and the importance of women's roles in various fields, as well as knowledge about women's rights. The program significantly contributes to efforts to prevent early marriage by providing educational alternatives and upskilling, which, in turn, strengthens women's position in decision-making regarding their future. Thus, women's empowerment through nonformal education can be an effective strategy for reducing the rate of early marriage and improving the quality of life of women in rural areas.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

The limitations of the research are in the location and data collection period, where the location is quite narrow, only in one village, and was carried out for 1 year when the program was running so that the sociocultural side could not be explored deeper. Further research must be carried out in the next 1 or 2 years to measure the effectiveness of the implementation program so that the latest data can be obtained on early marriage, women's education level, types of women's work, and other matters regarding women's empowerment and gender equality in Mekarmanik Village. It is hoped that further research can be carried out in other areas with different socio-cultures so that different strategies for preventing early marriage can be developed.

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