
ABDIMAS

Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15294/abdimas.v30i2.63878> | <http://journal.unnes.ac.id/journals/abdimas/>
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Education and Capacity Building for Adolescents and Their Social Environment in Early Childhood Marriage Prevention Efforts in Ranokomea Village, Poleang Barat District, Bombana Regency

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Abstract

Early marriage is a social issue that can affect the continuity of education, psychological readiness, reproductive health, and the family's ability to carry out parenting functions. Therefore, educational efforts that involve teenagers and the social environment comprehensively are needed. This community service activity aims to increase the knowledge, understanding, and awareness of teenagers and the social environment about preventing early marriage in Ranokomea Village, West Poleang District, Bombana Regency. The activity implementation methods include observation and coordination with the village government, delivering material by two resource persons, interactive discussions, and evaluation through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The first resource person from the Poleang Barat District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) provided education on laws, age limits, and marriage purposes based on regulations. The second speaker, an officer from the Poleang Barat District Family Planning (KB) office, gave a talk about couple's mental readiness, women's reproductive health, preparedness for parenthood, parenting, and preventing stunting in toddlers. The activity results showed that participants had a better understanding of the consequences of early marriage and the importance of being ready before starting a family. Participants also showed enthusiasm by actively joining in discussions and focus group discussions (FGDs), especially on topics like marriage laws, reproductive health, mental readiness, and child-rearing. This activity shows that preventing early marriage requires a multidimensional and collaborative approach that integrates legal, psychological, reproductive health, parenting, and social support aspects. Ongoing education and guidance are needed so that increased knowledge can turn into changes in people's attitudes and behavior when it comes to preventing early marriage.

Keywords: *teenagers; early marriage; reproductive health; family readiness; stunting prevention; community empowerment*

INTRODUCTION

Early marriage, or child marriage, remains a critical social issue requiring serious attention in Indonesia's community development agenda. This issue extends beyond legal compliance with statutory minimum age limits to impact educational continuity, reproductive health, psychological readiness, household economic resilience, child protection, and human capital quality. In rural community development, underage marriage constitutes a multidimensional challenge; the decision

to marry is not driven solely by individual choice, but is shaped by familial conditions, peer networks, cultural norms, educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and broader social dynamics. Nationally, Indonesia reinforced its regulatory framework through Law Number 16 of 2019 amending Law Number 1 of 1974 on Marriage, which established the minimum marriageable age for both men and women at 19 years. This policy underscores the state's institutional commitment to child and adolescent protection. However, legislative reform alone has not eradicated child marriage. Empirical evidence demonstrates that early marriage persists due to intersecting educational deficits, poverty, social pressures, cultural customs, familial perceptions, and entrenched community norms. Latifiani (2019) observed that child marriage in Indonesia correlates closely with low educational attainment, household financial precarity, early marriage cultures, and permissive peer environments.

These structural vulnerabilities are prominent at the village level, including Ranokomea Village in Poleang Barat District, Bombana Regency, Southeast Sulawesi Province. Ranokomea is an administrative unit within Poleang Barat District marked by an elevated incidence of child marriages. Administrative records document that out of 51 registered marriages, 9 involved underage individuals, representing an initial prevalence of 17.6%. Crucially, this reflects only formally documented unions. In practice, numerous underage marriages remain unregistered with civil or religious authorities, as community members recognize that administrative processing would be formally denied. In rural contexts, child marriage prevention must account for localized characteristics: familial relationship structures, adolescent social circles, educational and informational access, social definitions of adulthood, and the influence of traditional leaders and village institutions. Consequently, preventive measures cannot rely exclusively on top-down legal enforcement; they demand educational and empowerment initiatives that engage the community as active agents of change.

Conceptually, the persistence of early marriage can be interpreted through Bronfenbrenner's (1994) Social Ecological Theory. This ecological framework posits that human development and behavior are shaped through reciprocal interactions across concentric environmental tiers: from the microsystem (family and peers) and mesosystem (family-school-community linkages) to the macrosystem (overarching socio-economic conditions, cultural conventions, and statutory policies). From this vantage point, an adolescent's choice to marry prematurely cannot be isolated as an individual preference. It reflects parental socialization, peer pressure, communal conventions, financial distress, restricted schooling pathways, and prevailing beliefs regarding the ideal age of marriage. Preventing early marriage thus necessitates multi-tiered interventions centered on capacity building across adolescents, households, and communal networks.

Empirical studies across Indonesia substantiate this ecological perspective. An investigation by Fitria et al. (2024) surveying 4,360 adolescent girls in rural Indonesia revealed a robust inverse relationship between educational attainment and child marriage incidence. The study documented an overall early marriage prevalence of 11.9% and identified that women with lower educational qualifications faced significantly elevated risks compared to their more educated counterparts. These findings position educational continuity as an essential institutional countermeasure against early marriage in rural locales.

Education within early marriage prevention encompasses more than formal schooling; it involves enhancing adolescents' cognitive resources, health literacy, and autonomous decision-making capacities. Human Capital Theory indicates that education constitutes an investment that improves individual competencies, broadens life trajectories, and bolsters self-determination. Adolescents equipped with comprehensive knowledge regarding reproductive anatomy and pathology, the physical and economic consequences of early union, statutory children's rights, and long-range life planning possess stronger foundations for rational, autonomous decision-making. Community service initiatives delivering targeted education and capacity development for adolescents and their immediate social spheres are vital for establishing that continued schooling and structured vocational preparation represent viable, generative alternatives to premature marriage.

Beyond educational access, social norms play a decisive role in sustaining early marriage patterns. Social Norms Theory demonstrates that individual behavior is governed by perceptions of common practice (descriptive norms) and socially sanctioned conduct (injunctive norms). Research on parental and youth perceptions across Indonesia indicates that supportive attitudes toward child marriage remain prevalent: 25.8% of surveyed parents and 26.0% of adolescents asserted that a female is marriageable immediately following menarche, while unmarried young women beyond a certain age are frequently stigmatized as familial economic burdens (Wibowo et al., 2021). Preventive interventions must therefore address not only individual knowledge gaps, but also the normative

benchmarks circulating across households and local social structures. The influence of social norms is pronounced where communities maintain rigid standards regarding adulthood, family honor, youth association, and marriage readiness. In their analysis of Indonesian child marriage patterns, Hanifah et al. (2026) revealed that communities frequently navigate child marriage by negotiating across religious precepts, customary norms (*adat*), and positive statutory law. Under certain local conditions, customary authorities and religious interpretations take precedence over state regulations in adjudicating marital readiness. Strictly punitive or formalistic regulatory interventions risk falling flat when detached from these lived cultural realities.

Reproductive health literacy represents an essential technical pillar within early marriage prevention. Entering matrimony during early adolescence exposes young people to significant reproductive health risks, as physical, emotional, and psychological maturity are often insufficient for pregnancy, childbirth, and parental responsibilities. Community service efforts focused on adolescent reproductive health demonstrate that dedicated educational workshops concerning reproductive wellness and marriage timing significantly improve participant literacy. Syafruddin et al. (2023) highlighted the vital role of adolescent reproductive health education in mitigating early union through participatory briefings, focused presentations, group discussions, and evaluative assessments. Similarly, Agustia (2024) documented that community service interventions targeting adolescent reproductive health and marriage maturation yielded significant gains in participant comprehension and receptivity. The instructional syllabus covered definitions of early union, mental and physical health implications, and marital maturity milestones. These outcomes suggest that school- and community-based educational formats provide accessible, scalable platforms for preventive education.

Recent field programs further highlight that participatory pedagogical formats improve intervention outcomes. Kurniawan et al. (2025) executed a reproductive health intervention employing Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques, lectures, pocketbooks, and informational posters. Post-intervention evaluations indicated that 79% of participants achieved high comprehension scores, with the remaining 21% displaying moderate comprehension. This confirms that interactive delivery combined with age-appropriate media substantially reinforces comprehension of early marriage risks among rural youth. However, youth-directed education achieves limited traction if the surrounding social milieu continues to endorse early marriage. Research evaluating communal protection mechanisms demonstrates that community-based child protection systems are critical for sustained prevention. Communities cannot remain passive recipients of didactic instruction; they must operate as informed stakeholders capable of diagnosing local vulnerabilities, designing collective interventions, providing peer mediation, and safeguarding child welfare (Mahmuddin et al., 2023).

This framework corresponds directly with community empowerment principles, which position local populations as self-determining agents capable of collective problem-solving and institutional change. In Ranokomea Village, this participatory model requires strengthening the capacities of youth, parents, health cadres, traditional and religious figures, and village administrative leaders. Structuring the intervention around these core social pillars ensures that prevention moves beyond one-off instructional seminars toward establishing lasting collective awareness and localized institutional support. The operational validity of community-based methods is demonstrated by recent interventions in Baiya Village, which blended instructional lectures, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), participatory module drafting, and ongoing field mentorship alongside local health cadres, family welfare organizations (PKK), civic groups, and village health personnel. This systems approach confirms that building the institutional capacity of local community leaders is central to sustaining community-wide preventive education (Sakti et al., 2025).

A clear operational imperative emerges for an integrated community service program in Ranokomea Village—one that moves beyond basic didactic warnings against early marriage toward systematically expanding communal agency in supporting marital maturation. Because early marriage is sustained by complex interactions among individual knowledge, family expectations, educational continuity, financial pressures, social norms, and institutional frameworks, prevention requires an integrated curriculum. This framework must connect reproductive health instruction, analysis of early marriage risks, future-oriented life planning, ethical decision-making exercises, and communal capacity building. Accordingly, this community service initiative in Ranokomea Village, Poleang Barat District, Bombana Regency was established as an empowerment initiative providing targeted education and capacity development for adolescents and their supporting social networks. This framework positions adolescents as primary participants while integrating households, schools, village

administrators, religious leaders, traditional figures, and local health volunteers as an enabling environment. Beyond advancing factual literacy, the program aims to build collective community commitment toward marriage maturation, continuous secondary schooling, reproductive health protection, children's fundamental rights, and long-term youth development. Ultimately, this initiative is designed to deliver practical tools for Ranokomea Village to reduce early marriage while demonstrating an adaptable, community-based intervention model for rural settings confronting comparable demographic challenges. By uniting ecological framing, social norm alignment, individual capacity development, and grassroots mobilization, child marriage prevention is operationalized not merely as a numerical reduction effort, but as a broader strategy for cultivating an informed, healthy, self-reliant, and forward-looking generation.

METHOD

This community service activity was carried out as part of the student Community Service Program (*Kuliah Kerja Nyata / KKN*) of Universitas Sembilanbelas November Kolaka. The implementation was structured into three consecutive phases: preparation and coordination, educational intervention, and evaluation.

Preliminary Assessment and Inter-Agency Coordination

The first stage commenced with field observations and preliminary consultations with the Ranokomea Village Government regarding the prevalence and underlying factors of child and early marriage within the village. Child marriage was contextualized as a critical impediment to achieving several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly within the Social Development Pillar—namely Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and Goal 5 (Gender Equality). Subsequently, the team established inter-agency coordination with the sub-district Family Planning (*Keluarga Berencana / KB*) field officers and the Office of Religious Affairs (*Kantor Urusan Agama / KUA*) of Poleang Barat District to serve as expert resource persons.

Educational Intervention and Workshop Delivery

The second stage comprised the implementation of multi-perspective educational sessions targeted at adolescents, parents, and community figures. The initial module was delivered by representatives of the Poleang Barat District KUA, focusing on marriage legislation, statutory age requirements under prevailing Indonesian law, and the fundamental philosophical and religious purposes of marriage. The subsequent module was conducted by the Regional Technical Implementation Unit for Family Development, Population, and Family Planning (*UPTD Bangsa Kencana*), represented by the Poleang Barat District KB field officers. This session addressed psychological readiness, female reproductive biological maturity, and optimal early childhood caregiving and nutritional practices aimed at preventing childhood stunting.

Program Evaluation

The final stage was the evaluation of activity outcomes to measure comprehension gains and shifts in perception among the participants, including adolescents, parents, and community leaders. This evaluation was conducted using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), enabling in-depth qualitative feedback regarding the community's receptivity, commitment toward delaying the age of marriage, and collective strategies for community-based monitoring.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This community service activity was conducted as a preventive intervention to enhance the knowledge, comprehension, and awareness of adolescents and their immediate social environment regarding the multifaceted impacts and risks of child and early marriage. Preventing early marriage necessitates a comprehensive approach because this phenomenon intersects with diverse determinants, including education, healthcare, socioeconomic status, child welfare protection, and prevailing community norms (UNICEF Indonesia et al., 2020). Comparable outcomes were reported in adolescent empowerment initiatives through the REP2HEL Community program, which not only elevated adolescent knowledge but also engaged community health cadres and support networks as integral elements of the adolescent social milieu. Such an approach demonstrates that early marriage

prevention achieves greater efficacy when adolescents and their community are mobilized simultaneously (Podungge et al., 2024).

The program commenced with preliminary field observations and inter-agency coordination alongside the Ranokomea Village Government and administrative stakeholders across Poleang Barat District. This preparatory stage served to identify baseline community conditions, delineate target participant cohorts, and secure local government sponsorship for program execution. The core intervention was delivered through structured educational sessions presented by two expert resource speakers. The first speaker, representing the Office of Religious Affairs (*Kantor Urusan Agama / KUA*) of Poleang Barat District, addressed marriage law and the statutory objectives of matrimony under prevailing legislation. The second speaker, a sub-district Family Planning (*Keluarga Berencana / KB*) field officer, addressed psychological readiness, female reproductive health, and family-based caregiving practices essential for preventing childhood stunting.



Figure 1. Documentation of the Community Service Activity

These activities align with prior empirical research and community service literature indicating that targeted educational outreach effectively bolsters adolescent awareness regarding the negative ramifications of early marriage. For instance, youth mentoring initiatives in Bukit Raya Village demonstrated that combining structured mentorship with instructional video media and informational leaflets served as a potent strategy to expand adolescent literacy concerning the adverse impacts of underage union (Urnia et al., 2024).

Legal Education and the Statutory Purposes of Marriage

The initial module delivered by the Poleang Barat District KUA emphasized that marriage constitutes not merely a biological or personal association between a man and a woman, but a formal covenant carrying profound legal, social, and familial obligations. Participants were instructed on statutory minimum age requirements and the requisite multidimensional maturity prior to entering marital life. Sustainable matrimony requires physical, psychological, social, and economic readiness to ensure both partners responsibly execute their reciprocal rights and duties. The curriculum detailed the core philosophical objectives of marriage as the bedrock for cultivating harmonious and accountable households. This conceptual clarity is critical in guiding youth to reject premature marriage decisions or the erroneous assumption that early union represents an immediate solution to socioeconomic difficulties.

Within the national legal architecture, the amendment of Law Number 1 of 1974 by Law Number 16 of 2019 stipulates that marriage is permitted only when both male and female parties have attained the minimum age of 19 years. This statutory age increase forms a deliberate institutional effort to safeguard child welfare, facilitate optimal human growth and development, broaden educational access, and ensure individuals achieve emotional and physiological maturity before family formation (Republik Indonesia, 2019). Legal literacy instruction clarified to participants that statutory marriage age thresholds are not merely procedural formalities. Rather, these provisions safeguard fundamental child rights, encompassing the right to physical development, educational attainment, health protection, and long-term socioeconomic security (Republik Indonesia, 2019). Through this module, participants recognized that underage unions induce adverse consequences across educational access, physical health, social protection, and adolescent development. Consequently, robust mitigation

demands coordinated, multi-stakeholder interventions linking governmental bodies, households, communities, and relevant institutions (UNICEF Indonesia et al., 2020). These findings align with community service scholarship by Tahir et al. (2024), who emphasized that raising legal awareness serves as a pivotal countermeasure against early marriage. A deficiency in statutory literacy frequently leaves households with inadequate legal understanding when deliberating marital choices. In Ranokomea Village, grounding the intervention in legal principles helped adolescents contextualize marriage as an institution governed by binding legal and civic accountability. Furthermore, international scholarship examining adolescent marriage correlates confirms that educational attainment and cognitive awareness remain decisive determinants in mitigating early union, alongside socioeconomic security and information access (Das et al., 2024).

Psychological Readiness and Reproductive Health

The second educational module, presented by the Poleang Barat District KB officer, focused on the psychological readiness of prospective couples. Psychological maturity constitutes a cornerstone of functional family life, requiring partners to communicate constructively, regulate emotional impulses, execute joint decisions, and resolve domestic conflicts maturely. In early marriages, psychological unpreparedness frequently jeopardizes marital stability, as developing adolescents are thrust precipitously into complex adult roles as spouses and parents without adequate emotional grounding. In addition to psychological factors, participants received detailed instruction on female reproductive physiology and the critical importance of maintaining reproductive health from early adolescence. This foundational literacy ensures youth understand biological maturation milestones and the elevated health hazards associated with premature pregnancy. Adolescent reproductive health education operates as an essential preventive mechanism by fostering informed, autonomous decision-making concerning personal well-being and life trajectories.

Instruction was structured to instill accurate scientific understanding regarding physical development, reproductive organ functions, and hygiene. Providing comprehensive, age-appropriate reproductive health information is vital for enhancing the quality of life of young women and supporting safe, responsible decision-making (UNICEF Indonesia, 2023). The speaker highlighted that adolescence represents a formative developmental window across physical and psychological domains; hence, reliable information prevents misconceptions that could otherwise compromise behavioral outcomes.

Reproductive literacy was directly connected to the acute clinical risks of adolescent pregnancy. The World Health Organization (WHO) documents that adolescent mothers aged 10–19 years face substantially higher risks of eclampsia, puerperal endometritis, and systemic infections compared to women aged 20–24 years. Concurrently, infants born to adolescent mothers exhibit elevated risks of low birth weight, preterm birth, and severe neonatal conditions (World Health Organization, 2024, 2025). Preventing child marriage must therefore be coupled with robust reproductive literacy so that youth fully comprehend the biological and sociological repercussions of premature conception. High participant engagement during the interactive Q&A session indicated strong community interest and demonstrated the value of receiving authoritative health guidance directly from qualified family planning practitioners.

Caregiving Competencies and Childhood Stunting Prevention

The subsequent module examined the parental caregiving function, highlighting that parental readiness transcends biological fecundity to demand comprehensive cognitive, psychological, social, and economic preparation. This discussion was explicitly linked to multi-sectoral efforts to prevent childhood stunting. Stunting prevention requires continuous nutritional and health monitoring across the pre-conception window, prenatal stages, and the first 1,000 days of life. Consequently, the nutritional literacy and emotional readiness of prospective parents represent decisive factors in establishing resilient, healthy households. In child marriage contexts, caregiving readiness carries urgent relevance. Premature marital unions and early pregnancies expose adolescent mothers and their offspring to compounding health vulnerabilities (World Health Organization, 2024). The resource speaker emphasized that couples must possess adequate knowledge of child development milestones, pediatric healthcare, and balanced nutrition to execute optimal nurturing practices. Youth must recognize that family planning and marital preparation represent long-term human capital investments. These pedagogical outcomes support Khasanah et al. (2024), who demonstrated that integrating marriage maturation advocacy with adolescent health education provides an effective

mechanism for accelerating stunting reduction through measurable knowledge gains and behavioral shifts. Similarly, Vebriani et al. (2024) underscored the direct relationship between adolescent capacity building, early marriage prevention, and childhood stunting mitigation. In Ranokomea Village, contextualizing maternal health, caregiving duties, and stunting prevention helped participants recognize that cultivating a healthy household originates from pre-marital readiness.

The Role of the Social Environment in Early Marriage Prevention

Mitigating early marriage cannot remain the sole burden of adolescents. Households, village administrative bodies, traditional community elders, religious leaders, and institutional stakeholders form an essential ecological safety net. Parents retain a primary responsibility in modeling communication, delivering moral guidance, and supporting educational continuity. Simultaneously, village governments and affiliated institutions can reinforce preventive measures by organizing structured community education, providing social mentorship, and facilitating positive youth-oriented activities. The Ranokomea intervention showcased the operational potency of inter-institutional synergy among the Village Government, KUA, sub-district KB officers, and local residents, enabling a multi-pronged approach that integrated legal, medical, psychological, and sociological perspectives.

Community-based frameworks for mitigating early marriage have gained substantial empirical support across Indonesian community development scholarship. Winarsih and Ismail (2024) demonstrated that mobilizing community agency through the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) framework significantly elevates communal literacy in countering child marriage. Furthermore, establishing peer counseling networks empowers adolescents to function as grassroots change agents within their peer environments, effectively elevating peer group attitudes, knowledge, and communicative skills regarding marriage maturation (Kurniadi et al., 2023). These findings substantiate the intervention outcomes in Ranokomea Village: sustainable early marriage prevention necessitates mobilizing the broader social environment. Families, traditional authorities, religious leaders, village officials, marriage registrars, and community healthcare cadres must function as an integrated, vigilant support system that protects child welfare and fosters an enabling environment for adolescent self-actualization.

CONCLUSION

Based on the program execution and existing scholarship, early marriage prevention clearly demands an integrated, multi-perspective approach combining statutory legal literacy, reproductive health education, and psychosocial preparedness for familial responsibilities. The community service initiative in Ranokomea Village demonstrated this comprehensive framework through cross-sectoral collaboration between the Poleang Barat District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), which detailed marriage legislation and statutory limits, and the sub-district Family Planning (KB) officers, who addressed reproductive physiology, mental maturity, and family resilience. This inter-institutional synergy represents a core strength of the intervention, establishing that mitigating child marriage requires more than knowledge of legal prohibitions; it necessitates empowering youth to make informed life choices, safeguard their reproductive health, and establish resilient households. These findings strongly align with empirical evidence demonstrating that educational interventions, adolescent empowerment, community capacity building, reproductive health literacy, and social environment engagement constitute vital pillars of effective child marriage prevention (Faz et al., 2024; Kurnia & Christiana, 2024; Podungge et al., 2024; Vebriani et al., 2024). Consequently, the initiative in Ranokomea Village serves as an impactful, community- and collaboration-based educational model capable of simultaneously advancing adolescent awareness and mobilizing the surrounding social ecosystem to prevent early marriage sustainably.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

The authors declare that no generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing process of this manuscript.

CONFLICTING INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors states that there is no conflict of interest in the publication of this article.

FUNDING INFORMATION STATEMENT

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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