



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT THROUGH YOUTH PEER EDUCATION IN EFFORTS TO PREVENT CHILD MARRIAGE

Neny San Agustina Siregar*, Dedy Arisjulyanto, Tri Noviyanti Mansur

Poltekkes Kemenkes Jayapura, Jalan Masuk Poltekkes Padang Bulan No.2, Hedam, Jayapura, Papua 99351, Indonesia

*nenysansiregar@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Child marriage among adolescents is a social issue that negatively impacts health, education, and social well-being. Mimika Regency has a high rate of child marriage. This study aims to identify the effectiveness of the Community Empowerment program through the peer education method in preventing child marriage among adolescents in Mimika. The research design used is quasi-experimental, with a population of adolescents aged 15-18 years. A sample of 65 respondents was selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected using knowledge and attitude questionnaires that have been tested for validity and reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.917 for the knowledge questionnaire and 0.904 for the attitude questionnaire. Data collection began with a pre-test, followed by a post-test after the intervention. The results showed an increase in the mean score of adolescents' knowledge about child marriage from 31.20 before the intervention to 39.28 after the intervention, with a p-value of 0.000 ($\alpha=0.05$). Similarly, the mean attitude score toward child marriage increased from 21.32 to 30.98, with a p-value of 0.000. The conclusion of this study indicates a positive effect of Community Empowerment through Peer Education in preventing child marriage in Mimika Regency.

Keywords: adolescents; child marriage; community empowerment; peer education

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INTRODUCTION

Child marriage in Indonesia has become a national phenomenon, with culture playing a significant role in shaping societal life patterns, including early marriage. Marriages across various ethnic groups show that the issue of child marriage needs to be seriously addressed. Indonesia ranks 37th in the world for the highest number of underage marriages and 2nd in Southeast Asia. This is certainly not something to be proud of, as it affects population density, leading to higher birth rates (Kiwe, 2017; KP3A, 2023). Child marriage occurs due to a lack of understanding and knowledge among adolescents about reproductive health and the dangers of early marriage. This lack of knowledge also leads to high rates of premarital sexual behavior among adolescents, which is one of the factors that directly contributes to unplanned pregnancies and early marriages (Rosamali & Arisjulyanto, 2020).

The impact of child marriage affects maternal health and nutrition before, during, and after pregnancy, which influences fetal growth and increases the risk of stunting. Pregnancy and childbirth during adolescence are considered high-risk situations. Mothers who become pregnant at too young an age are at risk of delivering babies with low birth weight (LBW). LBW babies account for approximately 20% of stunting cases and contribute to the maternal mortality rate in Indonesia. Therefore, it is important to provide education and empowerment for adolescents to increase their knowledge about reproductive health and the dangers of early marriage (Kemenkes RI, 2018). The maternal mortality rate remains around 305 per 100,000 live births, which has not yet reached the target of 183 per 100,000 live births for 2022.

Research shows that the maternal mortality rate among adolescents is higher compared to that of adult pregnancies. The increase in maternal mortality during adolescent pregnancy is related to social factors such as maternal poverty, low knowledge, and a lack of medical resources, which can also influence maternal deaths. Adolescent pregnancy is also a contributing factor to premature births, which significantly impacts the infant mortality rate (Zhang et al., 2020).

The infant and maternal mortality rates are key indicators for assessing the performance of local governments, especially the health department, in efforts to improve public health. Currently, both infant and maternal mortality rates in Indonesia remain high. Therefore, maternal and infant health issues are still critical matters that need attention in Indonesia. One of the goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to reduce the infant mortality rate to 23 per 1,000 live births by 2030 (Winoto & Rachmawati, 2017; Latifah, 2021). The peer education intervention strategy has shown a significant impact in preventing early marriage and teenage pregnancies. Peer education has proven to be an effective model. Therefore, this community-based intervention could serve as a potential model to reduce the number of early marriages, especially in communities with similar socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds (Mehra et al., 2018). Peer education is effective in providing general reproductive health information. The topics of sexual and reproductive health include menstruation, puberty, contraception, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, pregnancy, abortion, sexual violence, gender issues, and child or early marriage (Siddiqui et al., 2020). Based on the background presented, the researcher believes it is essential to conduct a study on "Community Empowerment Through Peer Education for Adolescents in Preventing Child Marriage in Mimika Regency." The objective of this research is to prevent adolescent marriage through the intervention of community empowerment via peer education.

METHOD

The type of research used is Quasi-Experimental, also known as a quasi-experiment. The research design applied is the One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design. The study was conducted in Mimika Regency from May to October 2024. The intervention group will receive an educational treatment through peer education focused on early marriage. Data is collected using knowledge and attitude questionnaires that have been validated and tested for reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.917 for the knowledge questionnaire and 0.904 for the attitude questionnaire, indicating that these instruments are suitable for use in this research. Data collection begins with a pre-test, followed by a post-test after the intervention. The study population comprises adolescents in Mimika Regency, totaling 680 respondents. The sampling technique used is proportional probability sampling, where 65 respondents were randomly selected. Initial analysis includes data editing, where all completed questionnaires are gathered and coded, assigning specific codes to facilitate data entry. The third step involves scoring, calculating the score for each variable. The fourth step is data entry and tabulation, where all data is entered into a table according to the predetermined codes. The fifth step is data analysis, using descriptive analysis to describe respondents' characteristics with research variables. Finally, a paired t-test is performed if the data is normally distributed, and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test is used for non-normally distributed data.

RESULT

Distribution of Respondents' Characteristics

The characteristics of the respondents in this study can be seen in the following table:

Table 1.
Respondent Characteristics

Variabel	f	%
Sex		
Male	37	56.9
Female	28	43.1
Age		
15 Year	9	13.8
16 Year	39	60.0
17 Year	13	20.0
18 Year	4	6,2
Education Level		
Elementary School	16	24.6
Junior High Scholl	12	18.5
Senior High School	32	49.2
Bachelor's Degree	4	6.2
Master's Degree	1	1.5
Job		
Private Employee	44	67,7
Civil Servant/Military/Police	8	12,3
Farmer	9	13,8
Laborer	4	6,2
Information		
Pernah	63	96.9
Tidak Pernah	2	3.1
Sourch Of Information		
Health Workers	23	35.4
Teacher	5	7.7
Parent	9	13.8
Friends	11	16.9
Internet	17	26.2

Based on the data in the table above, the majority of respondents are male adolescents, making up 56.9% of the total. The most common age group is 16 years old, accounting for 60%. The majority of respondents' parents have a high school education, at 49.2%, the majority of respondents are employed in the private sector, making up 67.7% of the total., and the most common occupation among parents is working in the private sector. Regarding exposure to reproductive health information, 96.9% of respondents reported having received information, with the largest source being healthcare workers, at 35.4%.

Description of Adolescents' Knowledge Levels Before and After the Community Empowerment Intervention Through Peer Education

The distribution of respondents' knowledge levels before and after the intervention can be seen in the following table:

Table 2.
Description of Adolescents' Knowledge Levels Before and After the Community Empowerment Intervention Through Peer Education

Knowledge	f	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Pretest	65	26	41	31.20	3.284
Posttest	65	34	48	39.28	2.625

Based on the data in Table 2, the mean score for adolescents' knowledge about early marriage before the intervention was 31.20, with a minimum score of 26 and a maximum score of 41. After the Community Empowerment Through Peer Education intervention, the mean knowledge score increased to 39.28, with a minimum score of 34 and a maximum score of 48.

Description of Adolescents' Attitudes Before and After the Community Empowerment Intervention Through Peer Education

The distribution of respondents' attitudes before and after the intervention can be seen in the following table:

Table 3.
Description of Adolescents' Attitudes Before and After the Community Empowerment Through Peer Education Intervention

Attitude	f	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Pretest	65	14	28	21.32	3.143
Posttest	65	25	36	30.98	3.003

Based on the data in Table 3, the mean score for adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage before the intervention was 21.32, with a minimum score of 14 and a maximum score of 28. After the Community Empowerment Through Peer Education intervention, the mean attitude score changed to 30.98, with a minimum score of 25 and a maximum score of 36.

Analysis of the Impact of Community Empowerment Through Peer Education on Adolescents' Knowledge About Marriage

Table 4.
Analysis of the Impact of Community Empowerment Through Peer Education on Adolescents' Knowledge

Knowledge	f	Mean	SD	P Value
Pretest	65	31.20	3.284	0,000
Posttest	65	39.28	2.625	

Based on the data in Table 4, the mean score for adolescents' knowledge about early marriage before the intervention was 31.20, which changed to 39.28 after the Community Empowerment Through Peer Education intervention. The results of the statistical analysis showed a p-value of 0.000, indicating significance at $\alpha=0.05$.

Analysis of the Impact of Community Empowerment Through Peer Education on Adolescents' Attitudes Toward Marriage

Table 5.
Analysis of the Impact of Community Empowerment Through Peer Education on Adolescents' Attitudes

Attitude	N	Mean	SD	P Value
Pretest	65	21.32	3.143	0,000
Posttest	65	30.98	3.003	

Based on the data in Table 4, the mean score for adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage before the intervention was 21.32, which increased to 30.98 after the Community Empowerment Through Peer Education intervention. The results of the statistical analysis yielded a p-value of 0.000, indicating significance at $\alpha=0.05$.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the impact of Community Empowerment Through Peer Education on adolescents' knowledge about marriage

Based on the data in Table 4, the mean score for adolescents' knowledge about early marriage before the intervention was 31.20, which increased to 39.28 after the Community Empowerment Through Peer Education intervention. The statistical analysis yielded a p-value of 0.000, indicating significance at $\alpha=0.05$. The results of the study indicate that the community empowerment program through a peer education approach significantly contributes to enhancing adolescents' knowledge about marriage in Mimika Regency.

Specifically, this intervention successfully raised awareness among adolescents regarding the risks of early marriage, the benefits of postponing marriage until maturity, and the negative impacts of marrying at a young age, both in terms of reproductive health and social well-being. This study aligns with the findings of Arisjulyanto & Suweni (2023), who stated that community empowerment has an influence on preventing early marriage. Community empowerment is considered an effective step in preventing early marriage, as involving adolescents as partners in community empowerment activities improves their acceptance of the messages conveyed compared to other educational techniques. Outcomes of this program include the empowerment of families, particularly mothers, which enhances the family's knowledge. Previous community service efforts have shown that empowering mothers can increase adolescents' understanding of early marriage; family empowerment through education can improve family knowledge and enable parents to guide and remind their children about the dangers and risks associated with early marriage (Suhariyati & Rahmawati, 2023).

The impact of community empowerment through peer education on adolescents' knowledge about marriage is highly significant, as evidenced by various studies. Peer education initiatives have proven effective in increasing adolescents' understanding of marriage-related issues, particularly concerning early marriage and reproductive health. A study in Cirebon demonstrated a 90% increase in knowledge about the appropriate age for marriage following peer group education, with pre-test scores rising from 34 to 65 (Rohmana & Ati, 2024). More than 54% of participants improved their knowledge scores by at least 5% after peer counseling on early marriage and reproductive health (Wardhani et al., 2024). Research in Singkawang reported an increase in knowledge from 47.3 to 97.3 following educational interventions aimed at preventing early marriage (Asmariana et al., 2024). A study in Cilegon emphasized that peer education effectively enhances young women's knowledge and attitudes regarding the impacts of early marriage, highlighting the need for collaboration between schools and health institutions (Nurfazriah & Hartati, 2023). While peer education has shown promising results in improving knowledge about marriage, challenges remain in ensuring sustained engagement and broader community impact. After implementing the peer education program, it was found that adolescents' knowledge levels significantly increased. Before the intervention, many adolescents lacked a good understanding of early marriage and its consequences, particularly regarding reproductive and mental health. However, after the intervention, adolescents became more aware of risks such as complications during pregnancy, high maternal and infant mortality rates, and the psychological impacts that can result from early marriage (Arisjulyanto, Puspitas, et al., 2021).

The effectiveness of the peer education approach lies in adolescents' ability to more readily accept information from their peers. According to the study's findings, this approach enables adolescents to feel more comfortable discussing and asking questions about sensitive issues, including early marriage. This method also addresses the resistance often encountered when adults provide similar information. Furthermore, it empowers adolescents to become agents of change, which enhances their social responsibility toward their community (Siddiqui et al., 2020; Tang et al., 2022). Although the results indicate a positive impact, the implementation of this program faces several challenges. One of the main obstacles is the social and cultural norms that still support early marriage in some remote areas of Mimika Regency. Some families continue to view early marriage as part of their tradition, making efforts to change this perspective require more intensive approaches that involve local community leaders. Additionally, another challenge is the lack of access to education and adequate facilities in certain areas, which hampers the optimal implementation of the program. Nevertheless, this

program demonstrates potential as an effective tool for changing adolescents' behaviors and attitudes toward marriage, particularly in areas with high rates of early marriage (Putria, 2020).

According to Yelni et al., (2019), the occurrence of early marriage can be attributed to several factors, including economic issues, customs, education, parental decision-making, and residing in rural areas. Some of the effects that may arise from early marriage include domestic violence, psychological burdens and stress, abuse, health issues, women's independence, maternal and child health, and children's school attendance rates. Possible intervention efforts include enhancing education and knowledge, media exposure, peer education methods, and involving religious and social leaders in educational activities for adolescents. The findings from this literature can assist in understanding the effects of early marriage and developing comprehensive therapeutic prevention measures. The implications of this research are highly relevant to public policy regarding the prevention of early marriage. The community empowerment program through peer education has proven to be one solution for increasing knowledge and reducing the practice of early marriage. Therefore, it is recommended that this program be expanded and integrated into the formal education system in Mimika Regency. Involvement from schools, communities, and local leaders should also be enhanced to support the sustainability of this program.

Analysis of the Influence of Community Empowerment Through Peer Education on Attitudes Toward Marriage Among Adolescents

Based on the data in Table 4 above, the mean attitude score of adolescents toward early marriage before the intervention was 21.32. After the intervention through Community Empowerment via Peer Education, this score increased to 30.98. The statistical analysis revealed a p-value of 0.000, which is less than $\alpha = 0.05$. The analysis indicates that the community empowerment program through peer education has a significant impact on shaping more positive and rational attitudes toward marriage among adolescents in Mimika Regency, particularly regarding the postponement of marriage. By involving adolescents as agents of change, community empowerment has facilitated a transformation in attitudes, marked by an increased awareness of the importance of physical, mental, and economic readiness before marriage. According to the research by Muhajarah & Fitriani (2022), preventing early marriage through community empowerment is crucial for increasing adolescents' knowledge about early marriage and the Marriage Age Maturity Program (PUP). This effort aims to reduce the incidence of early marriage in the community. One effective method of educating adolescents is through peer education. Research by Arisjulyanto & Suweni (2023) supports these findings, showing that community empowerment influences the prevention of early marriage by enhancing adolescents' knowledge and behavior. Through their direct role as agents of change, adolescents can educate their peers about reproductive health and the risks of premarital sex, making the information more easily accepted (Arisjulyanto et al., 2021).

Adolescents are a vulnerable group susceptible to various social, health, and psychological issues. They are more likely to be negatively affected by life's challenges, particularly those associated with dating. Adolescents in relationships are at a higher risk of engaging in premarital sexual behaviors, especially if influenced by peers with negative behaviors and low self-efficacy regarding sexual control (Hanifah et al., 2022). Peer education has proven effective in increasing adolescents' knowledge about early marriage because the two-way communication that occurs among peers is more readily accepted (Kadafi et al., 2022). Additionally this program represents an innovation that can positively change

adolescents' behavior. The empowerment process positions adolescents as active partners in educational activities, positively impacting their attitudes and behaviors (Yusuf & Ilmiyani, 2023).

The peer education program implemented within the Community Empowerment initiative has transformed adolescents' perspectives on marriage. Before the program, many adolescents held permissive attitudes toward early marriage due to social norms, cultural influences, and family pressure. After the peer education intervention, adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage changed. They began to understand that marrying at a young age can negatively impact their reproductive health, psychological well-being, and economic situation, as well as recognizing the importance of postponing marriage until reaching a more mature age (Sari, 2021). This study found that adolescents' attitudes toward marriage became more critical and thoughtful after receiving information from peers trained through this program. Those who previously viewed early marriage as acceptable began to consider its long-term implications, including health risks and the potential interruption of education (Putri & Lestari, 2020). The effectiveness of peer education in influencing adolescents' attitudes lies in its delivery method, which involves adolescents as peer educators. This approach allows teenagers to more easily receive information and advice from their peers. These findings are supported by several previous studies indicating that peer education is an effective method for changing adolescent behavior, as peer interactions are considered more relevant and convincing than instructions from adults (Hakim, 2020).

This intervention also focuses on developing adolescents' critical thinking skills regarding marriage decisions. They are encouraged to consider factors that affect their quality of life after marriage, such as mental readiness, economic stability, and education. With this understanding, adolescents are more likely to reject the idea of early marriage and choose to postpone marriage until they reach a more mature age (Marlina, 2022). Several factors contribute to the success of this program, including the active involvement of parents, teachers, and community leaders in promoting the importance of delaying marriage. Support from various parties helps create an environment conducive to changing adolescents' attitudes. Additionally, the use of local media and educational methods that align with the cultural context of Mimika Regency facilitates the delivery of messages (Wijayanti, 2023). The results of this study have significant implications for efforts to prevent early marriage. Community empowerment through peer education has proven effective in changing adolescents' attitudes toward marriage, so this program is recommended for broader implementation, not only in Mimika Regency but also in other regions with high prevalence rates of early marriage. Furthermore, it is essential to involve community leaders and religious figures in the outreach process to gradually change cultural norms that support early marriage (Hakim, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that community empowerment through peer education has proven to be effective in influencing adolescents' knowledge and attitudes about marriage in Mimika Regency. This program successfully transformed the knowledge and attitudes of adolescents, who were previously permissive toward early marriage, into a more critical and wise perspective. The adolescents have become more aware of the importance of physical, mental, and economic readiness before marriage, as well as understanding the risks and negative impacts of early marriage, including those related to health, psychology, and social aspects. The effectiveness of peer education lies in the ability of adolescents to more easily receive information from their peers, creating a more comfortable and open environment for discussion. Support from parents, teachers, and

community leaders also plays a crucial role in reinforcing the messages conveyed through this program. Although there are still obstacles, such as cultural norms that support early marriage, this program has succeeded in creating positive changes in the knowledge and attitudes of adolescents. Therefore, community empowerment through peer education can be an effective strategy in efforts to prevent early marriage. Continuous development of this program and the involvement of all parties, including the government, educational institutions, and community leaders, is highly recommended to support broader social changes in Mimika Regency and other regions facing similar issues.

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